

REFLECTIONS OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
OF SELECTED WOMEN OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE): A
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATIONS,
SUPPORTS, REWARDS, AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY SEVEN
EMIRATI WOMEN IN THE YEAR 2004

A DISSERTATION
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BY
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Abstract

The study used internet text messaging to interview seven Emirati women about issues surrounding their post-secondary educational experience. Semi-structured interview questions were framed around the motivations, supports, rewards, and challenges to female educational participation in developing countries as described in the UNESCO (“Gender,” 2003) Global Monitoring Report and enriched with issues gleaned from sources specifically concerning Arab and Muslim women.

According to the participants in this study, the UAE government strongly encouraged Emirati women to contribute to the economic development of the country. At the time of this study, Emirati women outnumbered Emirati men 2 to 1 in post-secondary education and were employed in prominent positions in both public and private sector employment. Participants attributed several factors to female inclusion in post-secondary education and employment including a) compulsory education for boys and girls up to grade 10 and free to all qualifying Emirati students attending federally funded educational institutions up through 6 years of post-secondary education; b) establishing segregated schools, colleges, and universities for women which were at least equal to male facilities in terms of size, variety of program of study, and locational accessibility; c) enacting legislation guaranteeing similar civil and legal rights for women and men in education and employment; and d) providing incentives to companies to increase employment of UAE nationals males and females.

Even though the participants believed that the government laws and regulations guaranteed women equal rights with men, all participants acknowledged that cultural practices sometimes served as barriers to post-secondary education and employment

including a) Emirati marriage customs; b) limited freedom of movement for Emirati women; c) requiring Emirati women to obtain permission of their guardians to engage in economic activity outside the home; and d) fierce competition with Emirati men for the preferred public sector jobs. Participants were additionally concerned about a) a low Emirati male post-secondary educational persistence; b) societal changes caused by male / female role shifting; and c) changing cultural values in Emirati society caused by exposure to the West. Emirati women believed that the way to solve the issues concerning them was through strengthened adherence to religious teachings rather than political solutions.

Chapter I: Introduction

This study reported, examined, and accurately interpreted important aspects of the post-secondary educational experiences of seven Emirati women in the year 2004. The researcher originally sought to examine the four broad categories of: (a) motivations - factors that caused, led, or encouraged Emirati women to participate in post-secondary education, (b) supports - factors that aided, assisted, or benefited Emirati women while participating in post-secondary education, (c) rewards – tangible or intangible gains or benefits that Emirati women believed they would earn as a result of participating in post-secondary education, and (d) challenges – factors that hindered, or negatively affected Emirati women while participating in or considering to participate in post-secondary education. The semi-structured interview guidelines addressed issues identified UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report and other sources in the literature linked to increased or decreased female post-secondary educational persistence.

The UAE is a rapidly developing oil-rich country in the Arabian (Persian) Gulf with a total population around 2 million of which only about 20% are UAE Nationals (Al Abed & Vine, 1998). In the UAE female inclusion in all levels of education, most especially post-secondary education, is much higher than other developing countries identified in the Global Monitoring Report (2003) despite the region's perceived conservative social orientation. The purpose of this study is to uncover important factors contributing to the high post-secondary education rate of Emirati females in the UAE and make the findings available to policy makers in other countries who may benefit.

General Description of the Study

Societies have been transforming from the beginning of civilization shaped by the changes occurring inside and outside the society. The dominant cultures of the late 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century were a conglomeration of primarily English-speaking countries led by the US followed by the UK, Canada, Europe, and other former European colonies such as Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and others. The cultural attributes of the dominant countries, often called the "developed world" or "developed" countries, have been adopted by or imposed upon less dominant or "developing" countries through trade, advertising, and media.

The cultural evolution of many of the less dominant countries has been affected by the influx of dominant cultural attributes in ways that alarmed members of the less dominant societies. Alarming changes to less dominant countries included abandonment of indigenous languages, ignoring of long held religious and cultural practices, and a shifting of male and female roles and responsibilities. At the time of this study, three important factors were shaping the evolution of developing societies: a) economic changes caused by globalization, b) integration of rapidly developing technology into the countries' infrastructures and people's lives, and c) pressure from international organizations such as UNESCO or other Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) which strive to achieve their human rights agendas through educational programs and aid distribution (Institute of Ethics and Developmental Studies, 1999; James, 2002).

The societal evolution in the UAE included examination and modification of previously held belief systems, values, and the roles of men and women in the society. The expansion of post-secondary education opportunities in the UAE was a direct result

of the societal evolution because as the needs of the society changed so did the motivations, supports, rewards, and challenges that members of the society experienced when participating in post-secondary education or considering to participate in post-secondary education (Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

In developed societies such as those in North America and Western Europe, much literature existed describing women's perspectives of the motivations, supports, rewards, and challenges they experienced when participating in post-secondary education. Little literature existed, however, pertaining motivations, supports, rewards, and challenges experienced by women participating in post-secondary education in developing countries, particularly Arab countries and countries with a high Muslim population (Al-Oraimi; 2004; Lootah, 1999).

With much important international attention focused on the education of girls and women in developing countries, more evidence was required to aid local and western expatriate educators and policy makers in developing countries to understand the motivations, supports, rewards, and challenges faced by women participating in post-secondary education (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003; UNESCO, "Girls," 2003). In turn, understanding Emirati women's experiences will enable western expatriate and local educators and policy makers to better understand factors that influence women's participation in post-secondary educational programs, and the contributions of women in the development of a modern Arab Muslim country.

This study examined the post-secondary education experiences of seven Emirati women from each individual's point of view. As noted in the literature review (Alsawad, 1991; Althen, 1978; Bagnole, 1977; Basit, 1977; Farquharson, 1989; Helms 1978;

Khatib, 1995; Latouf, 1999; O’Hara, 2003), Arab and Muslim women experience more culturally imposed social limitations than Arab or Muslim men experience. Arab and Muslim women in many countries must have the permission of their families to participate in any activity or event outside the home. In addition, many Arab and Muslim women refrain from having their pictures taken or voices recorded fearing that the pictures or recordings might fall into the hands of men outside their immediate families who may use the pictures or recordings to bring shame to the women’s families. Therefore, internet-based messaging was selected as the medium of communication. Participants were given the choice of communicating using audio-chat, video-chat, or instant text messaging. All participants chose internet text-messaging as the medium of communication.

This research project had three main goals. One goal of the research project was to generate information useful to local and western expatriate educators and policymakers to enhance the educational experiences for expatriate teachers and Emirati students. The second goal of the research was to encourage self-reflection and a deeper understanding of the participants’ own educational experiences and to share the experiences with other Emirati women who were participating or considering participating in post-secondary education. The third goal of the research project was to contribute to the depth and breadth of the limited existing scholarly literature about the post-secondary education experiences of Arab and Muslim women.

Purpose of the Proposed Research Project

The purpose of this study was to report, examine, and interpret accurately the post-secondary education experiences of seven Emirati women from their own point of view in the year 2004. The study focused on four areas of interest: a) to what extent were the challenges to female participation in education identified by UNESCO ("Gender," 2003) experienced by the participants; b) perceived rewards from or benefits of participating in post-secondary education; c) challenges faced in utilizing the full potential of the perceived benefits of post-secondary education; and d) means of overcoming the challenges in participating in post-secondary education and utilizing the full potential of the perceived benefits.

The UAE was a useful example because the latest UAE Ministry of Information figures, confirmed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), placed the UAE as a leader in both formal and informal women's education among developing countries and exemplary in the region. The 1999/2000 data showed that 65% of those students who graduated high school were female and enrolled in women's colleges or universities. Women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, gained positions of responsibility, and started to become influential in decision making in both official and unofficial capacities (Al-abed & Vine, 1998; UAE Ministry of Education, 2001; UNESCO, Global Education Digest, 2004).

Information, facts and figures, and statistics outlining government policies regarding education, enrollment and completion rates, and job placements in the UAE presented an impressive picture but the numbers cited were only part of the picture. The

actual experiences of the female students were needed to show the implications of the facts and figures in the lives of females attending post-secondary education in the UAE.

Major Research Questions

The primary research questions were developed combining information from the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report entitled “Gender and Education for all: Leap Into Equality,” with information about issues affecting women's participation in post-secondary education found in other sources detailed in the literature review of this study.

Primary Research Questions

1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report experienced by the participants?
2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?
3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?
4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Secondary Research Questions

1. What were the attributes of participants' families, i.e. family size, educational attainment of family members; number of working family members; jobs held by family members?
2. What were the decision-making processes that the participants experienced when deciding to participate in post-secondary education?

3. In what ways did the government encourage female participation in post-secondary education?
4. In what ways did the participants view marriage and its consequences to their further education?
5. In what ways and to what extent did the cultural aspects of UAE society including religion affect participants' post-secondary education experiences?
6. In what ways were the participants' experiences different or similar to women in other Arab or Muslim countries?

Definitions of Important Terms

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this research.

1. ***Challenges*** are defined as any factors that inhibit participation in post-secondary education or cause participants to achieve less than their potential in realizing their perceived benefits of participating in post-secondary education.
2. ***Emiratization*** is defined as replacing expatriate workers with UAE nationals in the workplace in the UAE.
3. ***External factors*** are defined as any factors originating from outside the participant which affect the participant's post-secondary education experience.
4. ***Globalization*** is defined as the process by which societies adopt cultural attributes which did not evolve in their own societies such as speech, clothing styles, tastes, behaviors, ideas, and values of dominant societies through the process of trading, immigration, or conquest (James, 2002).
5. ***Personal attributes*** are defined traits existing in person including personality

6. ***Post-secondary educational experience*** is defined as participation in an officially recognized college, university, vocational school, or training program, either government-sponsored or privately-held, located in the UAE or abroad.
7. **UNESCO** is the acronym for the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, a division of the United Nations.

Significance of the Problem and Justification for Investigating It

Most of the post-secondary institutions in the UAE were government sponsored colleges and universities based on the North American model, used English as the medium of instruction, and employed an overwhelming majority of expatriate faculty and staff, mostly from North America, the UK, South Africa, or Australia. In contrast, the students were all UAE nationals and officially Arab and Muslim. Many students had experienced a teacher-centered primary and secondary education. All participants experienced the effects of rapid development that occurred in the UAE since the early 1960s in which the UAE transformed from a traditional semi-nomadic, nearly homogenous society to a technologically sophisticated, multi-cultural society. The rapid societal transformation caused a shift in the perception of roles and responsibilities of all members of society including husbands and wives, parents and children, and employers and employees, as traditional beliefs, values, and practices were reinterpreted to meet the changing needs of the society. Despite all of the potential obstacles and difficulties in the society, the UAE leadership maintained one of the best records in promoting education of males and females at all levels in the region and among developing countries in general (Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

This research project reports evidence about the post-secondary educational experiences of seven Emirati women and issues related their post-secondary education directly from Emirati women. The evidence obtained may be valuable to expatriate and local educators and educational policy makers within the UAE as well as educators and policymakers in international organizations like UNESCO who study education on an international level. The qualitative evidence generated may also provide foundation information useful in designing quantitative follow up research.

Basic Assumptions

It is assumed that:

1. by asking participants to describe aspects of their life, freely, from their own perspective, important evidence will be captured about each individual.
2. by examining the evidence obtained in the seven cases, commonalities, patterns, relationships, and contradiction will emerge.
3. by gathering information from participants with varying backgrounds, richer evidence will be obtained.
4. the themes and patterns that emerge will describe the experiences of seven women at a specific time and place and serve as one source for follow-up qualitative or quantitative studies.

Basic Limitations

The limitations of this study included:

1. the limited number of participants. Seven participants was a manageable number of participants to interview at least three times in depth with open-ended questions.

2. the deliberate method of selecting participants. Posting requests for participants on the websites frequented by students limited the study by attracting only students who used the internet, were able to read and type in English, used an internet messaging program, and were willing and able to commit at least three hours of time on the internet over the course of the interviews.
3. interviewing only participants or past participants in post-secondary education. Stipulating that a participant must have participated in post-secondary education for at least one year, the study did not seek to obtain evidence on challenges which discouraged potential participants in post-secondary education.
4. the extraordinary experiences of the selected participants. Participants who have internet access, can spend the required time being interviewed, are functional in written English, and are willing to volunteer and participant in the study may not have typical educational experiences but rather exceptionally positive educational experiences. However, obtaining evidence about exceptionally positive experiences is valuable.
5. the inability to generalize evidence given by the small sample of participants. The study targeted rich full descriptions from participants giving participants the maximum amount of latitude to discuss issues important to each individual and relevant to the study. Although each case provided rich information about the individual, the evidence can not be considered representative of the experiences of Emirati women in general.
6. the conservative nature of UAE society in which outsiders have limited access to members of society on a personal level. The nature and scope of the information

given in the responses of the study is limited by the level of comfort that each participant felt in giving personal information to a questioner unknown to the participant using an internet instant messaging program.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review for this study was an ongoing endeavor. The preliminary literature review provided a basis for the study and provided the researcher with important information about the UAE and Emirati society. During the preliminary stage, the researcher discovered that large gaps existed in the body of academic literature on topics related to Muslim and Arab women's post-secondary education. The intermediate portion of the literature review occurred as the interviews were taking place. As the participants gave evidence, the researcher discovered new areas and avenues to research necessary in preparing meaningful follow-up questions and accurately interpreting the participants' responses. The concluding portion of the literature review occurred after all the interviews had taken place and during the analysis process as issues surfaced that required more research to fully understand and accurately interpret the responses.

Sources consulted during the preliminary phase of the literature review included library catalogs, electronic databases, Middle East periodicals and journals, educational periodicals and journals, and bibliographies. To illustrate the scarcity of academic literature about Arab and Muslim women's post-secondary education experiences at the time of this study, the following table was constructed containing the results of searches in two of the most commonly used academic literature databases, UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertations abstracts and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) newly accessible in October 2004. The searches reflected in this table served as important starting points to locating academic sources of information for this study.

Table 1
Preliminary Database Searches and Keywords Used

Academic Database	Citations Found	Citations Relevant
Digital Dissertations		
Arab, Post-secondary, Education	5	1
Post-secondary, Education, UAE	1	0
Post-secondary, Education, United Arab Emirates	1	0
Education, United Arab Emirates	43	5
Arab, Women, Education	52	3
College, United Arab Emirates	13	3
Education, Women, Jordan	29	2
Education, Women, Egypt	47	4
Muslim, Women, Education	178	6
ERIC		
Arab, Women	88	7
Muslim, Women, Education	44	3

As illustrated in Table 1, the researcher had to broaden the searches rather than narrow the searches. Additionally, even the broadest searches, i.e. “Arab” combined with “Women,” produced few citations in either database.

The researcher reviewed and obtained relevant sources found in the Digital Dissertations and ERIC databases focusing on isolating important topics and following up with citations given in the references list for each relevant work. Most of the citations that were found, but not relevant, consisted of studies related to health education programs for Arab or Muslim women in rural or urban areas. The painstaking preliminary research process led the researcher to examine more obscure academic databases, to conduct searches using authors’ names who had published work on the Middle East or Arab women’s educational experiences, to search databases containing periodicals publishing regularly on Middle East or Islamic issues, and so on. Often

articles about other aspects of Arab or Muslim societies contained incidental, but important, information about issues related to Arab or Muslim women's educational experiences. Important information was extracted and collated into a logical framework providing the context of the study, background on the important issues of the study, and support for the conclusions drawn by the researcher.

The literature review of this study examined academic and popular literature and was divided into four broad categories with relevant sub-categories. The four main categories included: a) context of the study; b) the UAE and the Emirati people: History and background; c) contemporary issues affecting Emirati women's post-secondary education; and d) issues affecting the post-secondary education of Arab and Muslim women in other countries.

Context Of The Study

Building the Foundation

UNESCO and UNESCO publications.

The most frequently cited sources of contemporary information about women's education in developing countries and issues related to women's education in developing countries were the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) publications. UNESCO was created in November 1945 as a specialized United Nations (UN) agency devoted to promoting education, social and natural science; and culture and communication to "build peace in the minds of men" ("About UNESCO", n.d.). The role of UNESCO grew to encompass serving as a clearinghouse and disseminator of information and knowledge in the areas of education, science, culture, and communication because, according to UNESCO, "the world urgently requires global

visions of sustainable development based upon observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty" (UNESCO, n.d., "About UNESCO"; para 3).

The most frequently cited work in current literature on topics related to women's education was the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003) along with the statistics published in the Global Education Digest 2004: Comparing Educational Statistics Across the World (UNESCO, Global Monitoring Report, 2004). The educational goals presented in the reports were accepted and approved by all UN member and associate member countries at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000.

The Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003) reiterated the statements of the April 2000 Dakkar conference stating that education was a basic human right that was denied many women and girls. According to the report, "Fifty-seven percent of the 104 million [illiterate] children were girls and two-thirds of the 860 million adults without literacy were women" (p. 2). The report described ways in which females were held back at all levels of education worldwide and listed strategies that must be implemented to encourage girls and women to participate in education to their full potential. According to the report, the most important factors affecting the educational participation of women and girls in developing countries included:

1. Household dynamics. Women who earned an income tended to contribute significantly to the household decision-making process. In addition, women tended to spend "more [of their income] on education, health, and household services than men" (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003, p. 12). Girls and boys tended to be treated more equitably when women contributed significantly to the

allocation of household resources. Conversely, women who had no independent source of income tended to contribute little to the household decision-making process. Sons tended to be preferred over daughters when women contributed little to the allocation of scarce household resources.

2. Working children. According to the report, "Eighteen percent of the children aged 5-14 years are economically active... and about half of them are girls" (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003, p. 13). Girls engaged in non-income providing activities such as housework, childcare, or working in a family business, although substantial, were not included.
3. Traditional practices. Early marriage, teenage childbearing, and other traditional practices caused girls and young women to leave the educational process early (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003). (Note: This researcher used the UNESCO label of "traditional" although teenage childbearing has been and continues to be a barrier to educational persistence in many "modern" societies as well.)
4. HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. In areas where armed conflicts occurred, girls and young women played a part by supplying labor for support services for troops and in some cases fighting. Girls and young women in conflict areas were also more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, rape, violence, and the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Girls and young women who experienced some sort of disability were often excluded from the educational system (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003).

5. Decent and free school. Girls and young women were often excluded from the educational system because parents could not afford the costs associated with attending school such as tuition, uniforms, books, and so on. Parents often did not allow girls to travel long distances to far away schools fearing for their safety. The school facilities were often inadequate with no running water, toilets, or means of hygienically addressing the needs of menstruating girls (UNESCO, “Gender,” 2003).
6. Trained Staff and female role models in schools. Teachers and other staff members in schools tended to be males and tended to allow culturally-biased attitudes to enforce gender-related stereotypes in which girls were perceived as less intelligent and less deserving of an education. In some cases, girls were harassed and given domestic chores to perform in schools such as fetching water or cleaning the classroom (UNESCO, “Gender,” 2003).
7. Educational representation. Although girls and women outnumbered boys and men in educational systems in many developing countries, women were not able to realize a return on their educational investment as readily as men. In many countries, career choices were restricted mainly to education, health care, or some other area considered socially appropriate. With men dominating in the fields of governance, finance, and banking, women had little chance to contribute to important facets of society (UNESCO, “Gender,” 2003).

The report ended by listing practices that governments could implement to increase the participation of girls and women in the educational process:

1. Playing a leading role promoting an equal education by enacting legal reforms and increasing and improving educational facilities for girls and women.
2. Defraying the costs of education so that educating girls was not a burden to poor families.
3. Empowering women by making women a part of the economic and political decision-making process (UNESCO, "Gender," 2003).

The preceding framework of obstacles to girls' and women's participation in education and strategies that governments could implement to increase girls' and women's participation in education was used as a guide to research questions about girls' and women's education in the UAE as detailed in Chapter III: Methodology.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) was established to maintain and provide more accurate global education statistics, with the Global Education Digest 2004: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World produced as the second in a series of annual publications examining important topics in relation to global education statistics. Although widely cited, the Global Education Digest 2004 (UNESCO, 2004), illustrated the major problem with finding information about Arab and Muslim women's education. Educational statistics were calculated and presented by incorporating large geographic areas such as Asia or Africa rather than reporting statistics by ethnically and culturally more distinct areas such as the Middle East, Latin America, and so on. Additionally, the digest fully acknowledged that the statistics produced and published by the UIS were based on the raw data provided by the local administrative systems in the member countries and, due to time constraints and funding limitations, verification was not possible as (UNESCO, Global, 2004).

As an example, countries on the Arab peninsula including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and so on and countries in Asia minor including Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and so on were combined with all Asia in the statistics including India, and South East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. Countries located in North Africa including Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and so on were included in educational statistics with all African countries. The grouping skewed the relevance of the educational statistics for any distinct cultural or ethnic group, specifically, the Middle East, rendering the statistics useless for understanding the educational situation of women in the Middle East, Arab women, or Muslim women (UNESCO, Global, 2004).

As a second example, in a chart illustrating the positive correlation between school life expectancy and living in a high-income country, no Arab countries in Asia were given a bar in the bar graph (UNESCO, Global, 2004, p. 10). Rather, all Arab countries in Asia were grouped together with other Asian countries under the heading "twenty-nine other countries" and were shown having 0 years school life expectancy. However, as noted by the UAE Ministry of Education (2001), education in the UAE was compulsory up to age eleven for boys and girls and the Emirati citizens complied nearly 100%. The statistics in two reports were not consistent.

The fundamental problem of comparing statistics by large regions rather than by individual countries or culturally similar smaller regions was illustrated a third time in the case of school life expectancy. In some regions, a few privileged students received 17 years or more of education while the majority received 4 years or less. In other regions, most students received 8 or 9 years of schooling. Yet, in both cases the mean statistic was the same. In the first case, the statistic was skewed because the average was very

different from the two existing extreme conditions. In the second case the average more accurately reflected the true condition. Specifically, statistics calculated by lumping the countries into very large geographic areas such as Asia or Africa, were useless to this researcher (UNESCO, Global, 2004).

As a follow up, the researcher accessed the raw data tables given in the appendices of the report and discovered that for the UAE, as well as some other higher performing Arab countries, the raw data were listed as "not available." Therefore, the comparisons made in the charts and tables in the body of the digest were completely irrelevant to the understanding the performance of the UAE and other countries with missing raw data. The absence of raw data was not pointed out in the body of the report, however, giving the reader the impression that the poor statistical representations were a result of poor performance not missing raw data (UNESCO, Global, 2004).

Further searching turned up some information on indicators of a country's progress and general literacy for women available on the International Literacy Explorer website (University of Pennsylvania, 1999). The International Literacy Explorer website reported on literacy issues using UNESCO published statistics and warned readers that statistics on literacy must be viewed with caution as reporting agencies were sometimes rushed into publication and sometimes used differing definitions of literacy. The International Literacy Explorer website included links to several literacy projects around the world and literacy related statistics by country (University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

The researcher accessed the raw data from a number of tables listed by country in the International Literacy Explorer website (University of Pennsylvania, 1999) and constructed the following table comparing "Indicators of Progress" in the UK, the US,

the UAE, and the combined Arab States. Note that many important indicators of literacy were not given by sources in the U.K. and the U.S.

Statistical Indicators	UK	US	UAE	Arab States
Literacy / Education				
Adult illiteracy rate (total %)	--	--	20.8	30.2
Adult illiteracy rate (male %)	--	--	21.1	19.5
Adult illiteracy rate (female %)	--	--	20.2	40.1
Expected years of schooling	16.3	15.8	10.0	10.6
Cohorts completing 5 grade (percentage)	--	--	98.0	89.0
Economic				
GNP per Capita (US\$)	18700	26980	17400	3020
Public expenditure on education (% of GNP)	5.5	5.3	1.8	9.6
Health / Mortality				
Fertility (births per woman)	1.7	2.0	3.5	4.5
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 1989-1995)	--	--	20	220
Life expectancy at birth	77	77	75	50
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	6	7	15.0	56.0
Under age 5 mortality (per 1,000 births)	7	10	19	74
Information / Communication				
Newspapers per 1,000 inhabitants	344	218	136	31
Radios per 1,000 inhabitants	1433	2093	271	131
Televisions per 1,000 inhabitants	448	805	104	19
Personal computers per 1,000	186.2	328	48.4	--

Note. Dashes indicate information not given by host country.

Table 2 lists important indicators of progress used by international organizations to assess development. The table pointed out that school life expectancy was around 10 years and that nearly all students completed the basic five or six years of schooling which more than satisfied the educational goals established by UNESCO (2003) in the Global Monitoring Report. The public expenditure on education at 1.8 % seemed low compared to 9.6 % for the other Arab countries but the difference was explained by the difference

in GNP figures. The GNP for the UAE was much higher than the GNP of most other Arab countries making the percentage spent on education small by comparison. However, the actual currency spent was several times greater. The table shows that the UAE has made progress in areas of society other than education. The indicators were well above the average of other Arab countries and in some cases, particularly health related indicators, the UAE was quite similar to the U.S. and U.K. The researcher noted that the literacy statistics were missing from U.S. and U.K. However, upon further examination, this researcher found an explanation. According to the International Literacy Explorer website, in the United States "it was assumed for many years that over 90 % of the citizens are literate" yet a 1993 survey revealed, "that up to 50 % of the population had trouble dealing with many basic literacy tasks" (University of Pennsylvania, 1999, "Introduction: The Limitations of Literacy Statistics", para 3).

The UNESCO publications previously cited were widely cited by professionals in the subsequent educational publications and presentations. However, this researcher noticed that facts, figures, and statistics were sometimes misused or taken out of context when cited in subsequent publications.

In one example, the researcher found that during a high level meeting and in important international forum, presenters gave biased and inaccurate descriptions of the situations of Arabs and Muslims especially in the area of education. The misleading and inaccurate comments of three panelists were recorded in the transcript of the November 20, 2002 meeting of The Academy for Educational Development: The AED Global Learning Group. Three panelists discussed educational issues in the "Muslim world" and

the "Arab world" as presented in the proceeding publication [Education in the Muslim World: What's Next?](#) (Academy for Educational Development, 2002)

The moderator, Caryle Murphy, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist for the [Washington Post](#) and the author of [Passion for Islam](#), discussed a report entitled "Creating opportunities for future generations" found in [The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report](#) (2002) (cited in Academy for Educational Development, 2002). As quoted by Murphy, the report painted "a dire picture for the Arab world as far as the future goes" in that "the Arab world will have to deal with obstacles of human development to have a fighting chance to compete in the globalized world" (Academy for Educational Development, 2002, p. 4). Murphy cited the statistics contained in the report stating that "sixty-five million adult Arabs are illiterate with two-thirds being women, only 6% of the population used the Internet, and only 1.2% had personal computers." Murphy concluded by quoting from the report, "Education should integrate the Arab world into the age in which they live, an age governed by the exactness of science, its causality, rigor and method' these things we take for granted in our educational philosophy here in the United States. They're not ones that are taken for granted yet in the Arab world." (Academy for Educational Development, 2002, p. 4)

Murphy's speech illustrated some of this researcher's problems with educational information about Arab and Muslim women. First, all Arabs were lumped together into a group called "the Arab world" with no definition to clarify the term. Then, the panelist commented on the "dire," again "dire" was not defined, situation of the Arab world as if all Arabs were one collective entity. Second, the title of the conference was "Education

in the Muslim world, What next?" The assumption with that title was that Arabs and Muslims were the same. However, as Sulaiman (2001) pointed out, many Arabs were not Muslim and the majority of Muslims were, in fact, not Arab. Third, the statistic of "two-thirds of the illiterates in the Arab world are women" was the same as the illiteracy statistics given earlier in the Global Education Digest 2004 (UNESCO, 2004) for the entire developing world. In the opinion of this researcher, the poverty-related issues that engulfed many Arab countries contributed to illiteracy in Arab countries as poverty-related issues contributed to illiteracy in other non-Arab developing countries. More affluent Arab countries, including the UAE, had high literacy rates for the general population and particularly females in the year cited. Therefore, the "dire" situation that was mentioned in Murphy's speech, was not accurate for "the Arab world" if the Arab world included all Arabs.

The second panelist, Uzma Aznar, discussed the situation in selected countries with majority Muslim populations including Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Mali, Senegal and Sudan. Many statistics were given portraying a bleak picture for the education of girls and women (Academy for Educational Development, 2002)

The choice of countries was indicative of the bias of the panelist who chose countries with the most severe problems in their educational systems. The countries included were actually some of the poorest countries in the world with historical circumstances which perpetuated poverty such as continuing civil war, as was the case in Sudan, large population with severe weather conditions as was the case with Bangladesh; and so on. The panelist implied that the high number of uneducated women in the

selected countries was a function of the countries having high Muslim populations, when, in fact, the causes of women and girls not being educated stemmed mostly from logistical issues resulting from poverty as previously cited in the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2003) such as not enough schools for all children, safety issues in war-torn areas, and allocation of limited resources. With the title "Education in the Muslim World: What next?" one would expect a more balanced discussion. However, countries in which educational goals were being met and had very high Muslim populations were conspicuously missing, such as the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and so on. The term "the Muslim world" used in the report was not defined. Most of the countries mentioned by the panelist had significant populations of non-Muslims. In addition, Muslims were found all over the world in large numbers, in nearly every country including the US, Canada, the UK, and other European countries as noted by Sulaiman (2001). Similarly, countries with low or negligible Muslim populations, but similar social circumstances, had high levels of uneducated women and girls (UNESCO, Global, 2004).

The third panelist, Husain Haqqani, Visiting Scholar, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, related the history of the evolution of madrassas (Islamic schools). Haqqani called for the abandonment of the madrassas as educational institutions citing that "Georgetown and Notre Dame are all essentially institutions that originated . . . from the church. The Islamic world has no parallels, no equals. What it has is very, very conservative institutions and people living in absolute and dire poverty" (Academy for Educational Development, 2002, p. 12). The panelist's statement illustrated his negative bias. First, the term "Islamic world" was not defined and neither was the term "institutions."

Second, not all Muslims lived in “absolute and dire poverty” as stated by Haqqani. As can be seen in the International Literacy Explorer statistics (University of Pennsylvania, 1999), citizens in countries including the UAE enjoyed a middle class to upper-middle class lifestyle. In addition, many Muslims lived in the US, UK, and many other countries. Sulaiman (2001) stated that after the events of September 11, 2001, terms such as “Arab World” and “Islamic world” were increasingly used by the media as labeling terms to consolidate and reinforce unfavorable images of Arabs or Muslims.

Media representation of Arabs and Muslims in western popular culture.

The attitudes and biases portrayed in the statements of the panelists were commonly demonstrated in the western media after the events of September 11, 2001. However, the roots of the stereotyping began much earlier especially concerning the stereotype of Arab or Muslim women as being oppressed and disadvantaged (Jarmakani, 2004).

Contemporary representations of the veiled Arab or Muslim women in the US popular culture as oppressed and silent victims of their own culture were prevalent in marketing, advertising, and entertainment media throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (Jarmakani, 2004). The stereotype resulted from the recurring use of the popular images of the harem, the veil, and the belly dancer. Once the images, and the Western interpretations of women in the images as beautiful, obedient, silent, servants or sexual performers, took hold in the imaginations of Western men and women, the stereotypes remained vivid images used and re-used in marketing products for sale, and as backgrounds for novels, movie themes, and music videos.

Jarmakani (2004) used three examples to show how images of Arab and/or Muslim women were used to in western societies to capture the imaginations of Western men and women in ways which did not correspond to the reality of Arab or Muslim women's lives: a) representations of harem and bath scenes in French Orientalist paintings; b) photographic representations of veiled belly dancers from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair; c) the tobacco advertisements in the early twentieth century featuring veiled women and belly dancers. According to Jarmakani, in all three examples, images of veiled women were used to stir the imaginations of Western men and women and contributed to the development of the present day stereotype of Arab or Muslim women as silent and oppressed sexual objects similar to the stereotypical "Jeannie" character in the television series I Dream of Jeannie. Further, Jarmakani asserted that in the historical time period that the images of the harem, veiled women, and belly dancers began appearing in the western media, the images were "seeming proof of the oppressive and backward nature of the Middle Eastern patriarchal power structure, and thereby, provide[d] a justification for colonial and imperial domination" (p. 4).

According to Sulaiman (2001), western media perpetuated the stereotype of the womanizing, abusive, Arab-Muslim terrorist before and especially after the events of September 11th 2001 in the U.S. in movies, advertisements, videos, books, and so on. The stereotype was so strongly entrenched in the minds of Americans before the events of September 11th 2001, that when the bombing occurred in Oklahoma City in 1995, the news media reported that Arab terrorists had committed the crime and that, according to one "terrorism expert," the bombing "was done with the intent to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is a Middle Eastern trait" (Cohen & Solomon, 1995, p. 5 as

quoted in Sulaiman, 2001, p. 10). The fact that the media reported the falsehood and people quickly accepted it, illustrated that many people believed the stereotype of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists.

Sulaiman (2001) described Arabs and Muslims and pointed out the differences. An Arab is any person whose native language is Arabic and can trace ancestry to any of 12 or more Arabic-speaking countries. Arabs can be Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or any other religion. Muslims, on the other hand, can be Arabs, but there are more non-Arab Muslims than there are Arab Muslims. Muslims use Arabic in religious contexts, but native languages can be English, Indian, Pakistani, or any other language. Racially, Arabs can be Caucasian, interracial, or black. Muslims can be found in nearly every racial group and subgroup from the U.S. to China, from Africa to Europe. Suleiman explained that after the events of September 11th 2001 in the U.S., the popular western media catalyzed and reinforced the negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims combining the most negative stereotypical aspects into one comprehensive super-villain stereotype.

Mainstream news agencies featured many of the so-called experts, many of whom were not even Arab or Muslim. By giving them access to present their biases for the public, they were able to reinforce prior prejudices that the public already exhibited, [such as] fear of foreigners, people of color, [and] people who speak a foreign language (pp. 10-11)

leading in some cases, to students being harassed in public schools and in public and private universities (Sulaiman, 2001).

Efforts to create cultural understanding between Arabs and Muslims and
Westerners.

Helms (1978) presented a preliminary analysis of differences in Arab and American cultures to be used as a basis for a guidebook for Arab students studying in American Universities. Helms included the eight cultural elements of greetings and farewells; hospitality and food customs; speech styles; proxemics (limits of personal space) and gestures; male/female relationships; concepts of honor, shame, and morality; educational customs; and concepts of time, work, space, competition, and friendship in the study. For example, Helms stated that differences in inflection and voice emphasis conveyed different meanings in the two cultures. Arabs tended to speak louder and to supplement speech with gestures to convey hospitality and warmth, while Westerners tended to consider loud speech as rude and vulgar. Extended Arab greetings and farewells conveyed hospitality and respect, but many Westerners considered them a waste of time. In addition, Arab male individuals tended to enjoy the sexual freedom of western women but did not want their own sisters, wives, or other female family members to imitate Western women. Helms stated that the information was useful also in reverse because it illustrated how cultural differences could lead to misunderstandings when Western faculty members work in colleges and universities within Arab or Muslim countries. For example, extended or direct eye contact between males and females may be considered rude and in some cases threatening to Arab or Muslim females. Therefore, female Arab or Muslim students may not maintain eye contact with male teachers for an extended period of time which may be seen as a sign of inattention or disrespect to Western male teachers. Arab or Muslim female students may feel that looking directly

into the eyes of a male teacher may be perceived as a sign of disrespect to the Western male teacher. Althen (1978) explored the social, political, and cultural factors of students from different areas of the Arab and Muslim world in his book, “Students from the Arab World and Iran” which consistently supported Helms’ findings.

Even though Helms and Althen published studies more than 25 years prior to this study, comparisons were on target for Gulf Arab countries. Particularly of interest for this study was Helms’ discussion of the Arab perceptions of time, work, space, competition, shame and friendship. From the researcher’s point of view, people in Arab or Muslim cultures tended to “work to live or survive,” in contrast to westerners who tended to “live to work” and whose personal identity was strongly linked to occupation. Arab and Muslim females who worked outside the home still considered families to be the focus of attention and the anchor of identity.

The imprint of Arab cultural upbringing, according to Farquharson (1989) greatly affects classroom dynamics and student behavior. Farquharson discussed the learning styles and strategies of Arab students in intensive language programs in the United States, examining important aspects of Arab culture including roles of oral and written language use, child-rearing, student behavior, the student teacher relationship in the classroom, and Arab cultural attitudes toward achievement, then linked the attitudes to observable classroom behaviors. For example, Arab students often did not ask questions in class even if the students obviously did not understand something. Arab students would wait until after class and ask a friend rather than ask the teacher. Arab students were acting on previous experiences with Arab teachers who did not expect students to ask questions and may even rebuke a student for doing so. Farquharson concluded that, to be effective,

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, or any teachers of Arab students, must recognize and respect the cultural differences of Arab students and address the differences in a constructive manner.

Many of the same ideas were conveyed as Bagnole (1977) discussed the conditions that expatriate teachers experienced in Arab countries in the study, "TEFL, Perceptions and the Arab World." Bagnole touched on the following topics: regional and cultural difference among Arabs, concept of time, role and importance of education, situation of women, concept of cheating, familiarity with students, and so on.

The preceding section dealt with the obstacles girls and women faced in education, negative stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims, ways in which the negative stereotypes were created and perpetuated, and efforts at overcoming the stereotypes. One of the researcher's interests in conducting this study was to contribute important information to the body of literature related to issues surrounding Arab and Muslim women's post-secondary education experiences.

The UAE and the Emirati People

Land, People, and History

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is an oil-rich country located on the northern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The UAE is bordered on the north by the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, on the east by Oman, and on the south and west by Saudi Arabia and is about 83,600 sq km (or 32,000 sq mi), or roughly the size of the American state of South Carolina. In 2004, the population of the UAE was about 2.5 million with about 80% of the population being expatriate workers and their families. Although, the climate is technically classified as a desert, the UAE is famous for its coastline. Water-based

recreation and tourism are increasingly important parts of the national income (“United Arab Emirates”, 2005; Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

The history of the UAE differed in many significant ways from the histories of other Arab countries. Archeologists discovered historical sites indicating that the UAE had been an important commercial center for the ancient world as far back as 3,000 BC. However, through the colonial period up through the middle of the 20th century, the UAE was virtually isolated as a British protectorate known as either the Trucial States or the Coast of Oman on maps of the time. Before the discovery of oil, pearls were considered the only UAE resource of value to the outside world. As a British protectorate, ships from the Trucial States could not venture past the coast more than fishing or pearling distance and only ships from the Commonwealth could come within trading distance of the Trucial States. The British, however, left the internal governing to the local rulers. Therefore, the UAE experienced little outside influence until the early 1960s when trickles of western-made products began entering the country. In the mid-1970s, however, after the federation and subsequent agreements with US oil companies, the UAE began receiving visitors and goods from all over the world (Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

The seclusion the UAE enjoyed during the colonial period allowed the Emirati society to preserve many of the traditions, beliefs, and practices that had been in place for literally thousands of years. The official language in the UAE is Arabic with English widely used for business. Nearly all UAE nationals are Arabs and Muslims, however, same UAE national men married foreign women. According to UAE Federal law and Islamic custom, the nationality of children was determined by the father’s nationality. Children with UAE national men and foreign mothers were granted citizenship while

children with UAE national mothers with foreign men carried the nationality of their foreign fathers and were not granted Emirati citizenship. Therefore, the custom evolved that UAE national women must marry UAE national men so that children would be considered UAE nationals and enjoy all the privileges and benefits of being UAE nationals (Al-abed & Vine, 1998; "United Arab Emirates," 2005).

Early in the modernization process, the rulers of the UAE realized that the oil wealth would not last forever and so the rulers set in progress plans to develop an educational system from scratch to train the future generations to take their place in the development of the country in a rapidly changing world. As globalization occurred, the UAE, particularly Dubai, seized the opportunities to use modern technology to build the infrastructure and to participate in the world economy especially in the internet based communications industry (Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

Although the oil and natural gas production played a major role early on in developing the national economy, in 2004, oil and gas exports comprised around half of the UAE's export revenues, indicating that diversification was succeeding. Because a large portion of the federal budget came from oil revenues and was spread across all seven Emirates, poverty among UAE nationals has greatly diminished. Emirati citizens did not pay taxes but enjoyed many social welfare benefits such as free medical care, government assisted housing to moderate income UAE nationals, and free public education up through 6 years of post-secondary education to qualifying UAE nationals (MSNEncarta, "United Arab Emirates", 2005, Government, Social Services, para 1).

The Federal National Council (FNC), the country's nominal legislature, had an advisory role in government. However, important national issues were routinely

discussed in the forum the FNC provided. The legal system was based on the Islamic teachings but incorporated many aspects of Western legal systems especially in commercial law (MSNEncarta, “United Arab Emirates”, 2005, Government, Executive and Legislative, para 3).

The economy grew so rapidly after federation, that a large number of expatriate workers were imported to work in all sectors of the economy. Although expatriate workers and families comprised about 80% of the population, expatriate workers comprised nearly 90% of the total labor force in 2004, making the unemployment rate among UAE nationals upwards of 16%. The government enacted laws working toward “Emiratizing” the workforce especially in the private sector. Tanmia, the national employment agency, stated in 2003 that 8,000 UAE nationals were trying to secure employment in a market that provided about 2 million job opportunities. Even more disturbing, according to Tanmia, about 50% of the UAE nationals seeking employment held higher diplomas or degrees (“Ministry examines”, 2005; “FNC Discusses”; 2005; “United Arab Emirates”; 2005).

The FNC debated the issue of high unemployment among UAE nationals in 2005. As a result, quotas have been enacted in several target private sector industries including banking at 5% and insurance at 4% and with other industries including Travel and Tourism and Real Estate to be given quotas in the near future. Many companies were reluctant to hire UAE nationals because many UAE nationals have little or no work experience and lack specialized work skills. In addition, UAE nationals preferred to work in the public sector which was perceived to have higher salaries, more benefits, and longer holidays (“Ministry examines”, 2005; “FNC discusses”, 2005).

Emirati women, especially married women, seeking jobs faced gender-related challenges from the workplace and households. According to Ali (2001) "the issue of working mothers has always raised arguments and debates among individuals, families and society as a whole (p. 8). Some Emirati men were opposed to women working at all, some men advocated women working but only with other women, and some men advocated that women should work anywhere as long as she maintained respect. Ali continued, "These attitudes are, however, slowing being changed as a result of the government's encouragement and the increased appearance of women in the employment market" (p. 8). In addition, support from influential women including Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak, the wife of the late UAE President Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan AlNahyan, have encouraged women to obtain educational qualifications and seek employment despite the challenges. Shaikha Fatima stated, "UAE women enjoy all their legal rights and freedom and have occupied some of the highest posts in the country" (p. 8). Latifa Fikree, a 1992 graduate from Dubai Women's College's first graduating class, started working for Citibank after graduation and was promoted to the position of the Vice President of Citibank in 2000 (Mohammad; 2002). In addition, in 2003, Shaikha Lubna Al-Qassimi was appointed as the Minister of Economy and Planning, the most senior female government official ("FNC discusses", 2005).

Overview of Education in UAE

The UAE Ministry of Education website, www.fedfin.gov.ae/government/education.htm, provided useful information about the educational strategy employed by the UAE government, the development of the strategy, statistical data regarding success, and plans for the future improvement of the educational system. The website contained

links to publications from other sources which supported or enriched the UAE Ministry of Education's information and statistics. All statistics contained in this literature review were confirmed in sources outside the UAE Ministry website when possible with the citations given.

A publication entitled National Report on the Development of Education in the United Arab Emirates During the period 1990/91 to 1999/2000 was submitted by the UAE Ministry of Education (2001) to the International Conference on Education in Geneva in September 2001. The report contained statistics, descriptions of educational programming strategies at all levels in the UAE, research conducted by the Ministry of Education and Youths of the UAE. Major educational reforms and innovations that took place between 1990 and 2000 were discussed, as well as problems that were discovered in the educational system, changes and planned changes to remedy the problems, and educational strategies for improvement.

According to the National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001), education has been a high priority of the government which had to establish an educational system from scratch after independence from Britain in 1971. The UAE constitution stated:

Education is a basic pillar for the society's progress. It shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free [to qualifying UAE nationals] in all stages. The law shall lay down the necessary plans for disseminating and universalizing education and for eradicating illiteracy. (p. 33)

In addition the constitution guarantees males and females equal access to education at every level. As an affirmation of the UAE government's commitment to the education and progress of women, the late President Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan asserted:

What women have accomplished in the Emirates in only a short time makes me both happy and content. We sowed our seeds yesterday, and today the fruit has already begun to appear. We praise God for the role that women play in our society, and it is clear that this role is beneficial for present and future generations. (Al-abed & Vine, 1998, p. 166)

The figures published in the National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001) showed that although males outnumbered females in the school age population, the equity index (number of either males or females attending school divided by total males or females in population) for both genders was 95% in 1990/1991 and in 1999/2000. The total number of males and females in the school age population increased by 43 % during that period. According to the report, the figures reflected that “the UAE is an Islamic community that believes in equity and does not distinguish between males and females … [and] the attitude of the families in the UAE intensifies the role of education regardless of gender” (p. 35).

The National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001) mentioned a survey

conducted in 1997/1998 in which the assessment and evaluation methods of Ministry schools were evaluated. The authors concluded that several problems existed in the assessment and evaluation of students in primary, preparatory, and secondary schools:

1. Exams focused on memorizing rather than assessing the intellectual skills of critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving.
2. Written forms of the exams were the most common form and utilized model answers taken directly from textbooks.

3. Students either passed or failed a grade based on comprehensive final exams conducted in the last week of the second semester.

The study prompted educators to implement major educational reforms to remedy the problems isolated in the study: a) providing needed training and professional development opportunities to educators and administrators, b) updating and upgrading content and teaching practices, and c) improving the assessment and evaluation systems to be more accurate and appropriate in assessing students' learning especially in the higher order and critical thinking skills. In addition, five educational principles were identified as directing principles for the future educational process:

1. Citizens and sound Islamic education to educate citizens on the Islamic religion and to develop an educational system committed to its teachings.
2. Education for promoting national affiliation to promote national, cultural, Arab, and Islamic identity and unity.
3. Education for deep-rooting responsibility towards society to acquaint learners with their rights and duties within the society.
4. Education for productive work to diversify educational opportunities in relation to the economic needs of the society's development.
5. Education for lifelong learning to broaden educational opportunities to provide wider learning benefits through the various institutions as the learners' needs indicate.

The National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001) listed the main problems and challenges facing national education at the beginning to the 21st century:

1. Sources of knowledge. Students in the first decade of the 21st century experienced a rapidly changing educational environment unfamiliar to their parents and grandparents. The grandparents, many of whom are still living, grew up in a culture where nearly all of the UAE citizens were illiterate but employed oral tradition to convey culturally important information. The next generation, the parents of the school age children of the 21st century's first decade, began attending school as the educational system was being developed and learned from books or other print material new to the preceding generation. The generation attending school in the first decade of the 21st century began using electronic media which had begun replacing printed material such as textbooks as learning tools. The transition from oral tradition through print material to internet and e-learning material in only three generations created challenges to understanding and families' perceptions of educational expectations.
2. Facilities. Transitioning from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm necessitated the renovation of many school buildings which were set up with a teacher's desk facing rows of student desks with little room to move around, set up small group work or activities, display products of student work, or engage in inter-classroom activities.
3. Funding. In all government schools, students attended for free with the government covering the educational costs.
4. Non-Arab maids and babysitters. As families became more affluent and more mothers attended formal education longer and got into the workforce, housemaids and babysitters became more prominent. Most housemaids and babysitters were

non-Arab and non-Muslim, but were responsible for nearly all aspects of the children's care. The result was that children were raised during very impressionable years with beliefs, values, and behaviors that sometimes conflicted with the beliefs, values, and behaviors of their parents. Children observed Christian, Hindu, or other religious practices sometimes imitating the practices to the frustration of parents. Children sometimes spoke broken Arabic or spoke Arabic with an accent similar to a housemaid's accent.

5. Rapidly developing technology. As the implementation of technology in more and more areas increased, the educational system grew and changed to accommodate the technological advances. For example, computer courses were established and staff had to be hired or trained to accommodate the changing curriculum offerings.
6. Changes in demographics. The population increased due to better healthcare and higher living standards increasing pressure on the government to provide resources to accommodate the growing population of UAE nationals.
7. Globalization. Globalization challenged the educational system to be open-minded enough to recognize and incorporate globally important issues in the educational curriculum while maintaining national unity and traditional values (See next category for examples).
8. Changes in culture and values. The communication and information revolution, especially the internet, email and other cyber entertainment had serious implications on the formation of thoughts, tastes, cultural views, moral and aesthetic values posing a great challenge in education's role in bringing up youth

on the basis of cultural values, national affiliation, and the commitment to Islamic teachings. Searching on websites, or just using free internet services including MSN Messenger and Hotmail or Yahoo email brought students in contact with "singles" advertisements which were not culturally acceptable. In addition, many western marketing techniques use "sex" as a marketing tool so women tended to be scantily clad, relative to cultural norms, and men and women pictured in advertisements were participating in activities which were contrary to society's expectations. The message to students was different in the home and in school frustrating the efforts of the school system to incorporate technology into classroom activities in primary and secondary school.

Gassoub Mustafa (2002), an instructor at a federally funded women's post-secondary educational institution interviewed college students about secondary school experience for a dissertation entitled: "English Language Teaching and Learning at Government Schools in the United Arab Emirates." The findings and resulting recommendations were consistent with the UAE Ministry report and particularly important as nearly all post-secondary education institutions conduct courses exclusively in English. Students perceived their English classroom environment in public secondary school as "boring, monotonous, nothing new, authoritative, and they had a very little role in it" (p. 127). Students perceived the school system of stifling creativity by imposing rote learning strategies and "blame(d) the system for failing to provide them with the basic language skills" (p. 127) to be successful at the post-secondary education level or in a work situation. Interestingly, Mustafa recommended further research on "investigat(ing) the factors that have an impact on their motivation . . . [such as] the role

of family in motivating their children, the role of the UAE environment, the role of culture, the role of the expatriate community, the role of the school environment and the learner-teacher power struggle" (p. 133).

The findings of Suliman (2001), who completed secondary school in the UAE, and Johnson (1984) supported the findings of the National Report on the Development of Education in the United Arab Emirates During the period 1990/1991 to 1999/2000 although in less detail. Suliman described the educational system in the UAE and its evolution from inception to its present form. Suliman concluded that on the surface the system high-quality appearance because it was so well funded, however, the appearance was misleading because the government's goals were not being reached in terms of producing the skilled labor pool needed in the UAE. Bahgat (1999) examined six Gulf Cooperation Council member countries including the UAE and discovered a mismatch between traditional and modern learning, an imbalance between locals and expatriates in the work force, and a gap in opportunities between men and women which again supported the findings and conclusions of the National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001).

Several Emirati students conducted research studies on educational system in the UAE. Rassool-Ali (1981) conducted research as part of a doctoral dissertation entitled: "Feasibility study for a comprehensive community college system in the United Arab Emirates" which explored aspects of the UAE society and educational system in preparation for developing the post-secondary education system in the UAE. Note that Rassol-Ali published the study before the two major federally funded higher education institutions, Zayed University and the Higher Colleges of Technology, were established.

His findings included: a) the number high school graduates was higher than the number of students entering the only federally funded University, located in Al-Ain, showing that roughly only 37% of the students were being served; b) the work force could absorb all graduates as the government imported about 98% of the workforce in all areas of the rapidly growing economy; c) the functions and outcomes generated by community colleges were desirable given the unique needs of the UAE society and economy. Therefore, the feasibility of establishing a community college system was established and the North American model was recommended.

Al-Nabeh (1983) supported the claims of Rassool-Ali and emphasized the need to obtain qualified UAE national administrators and teachers to replace expatriate educators and administrators at some point. Ghanem (1990) described the UAE economy in the late 1980s and emphasized the need for developing a quality workforce of UAE nationals at all levels of the economy. Ghanem pointed out the need for vocational type post-secondary education institutions to educate young nationals for the entry level positions most needed. Khlaifat (1993) contributed that UAE students lacked choices in post-secondary education opportunities in terms of institutions and occupational opportunities as evidenced by the existing post-secondary institutions in existence; the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain, Ajman University College of Science and Technology, Dubai College of Medicine, and the Islamic Studies Institute. Khlaifat concluded that the educational offerings must be increased to include relevant occupations to the rapidly modernizing economy and occupations acceptable to Emirati women and their families.

As students progressed through the primary and secondary school systems, the need became apparent for a post-secondary educational system to train the national

workforce for entry level positions necessary to maintain the expanding economy. In 1977 the United Arab Emirates University (UAE University) opened but did provide programs for training students in the most needed entry level technical jobs. So, the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), a system of government-sponsored community-style vocational colleges, was established in 1987 to fill the gap. Recognizing that women's opportunities for higher education in professional occupations were limited, the government opened two campuses of Zayed University for Women in 1998, one in Dubai and one in Abu Dhabi. All of the government sponsored post-secondary institutions, as well as some private, were segregated in that Emirati men attend at one campus and Emirati women attended another campus at each location, although both male and female faculty and staff could be found at all locations (Al-abed & Vine, 1998).

Factors Affecting Academic Success in the UAE.

The role of career preparation in the post-secondary education process.

Al-Adhab (1992) discussed the role of career planning in the post-secondary education process in the UAE and its importance as increasing numbers of females entered the colleges, universities, and prepared to work in a society that is rapidly changing. Al-Adhab described two kinds of preparation, systematic – provided by a learning institution or agency, and unsystematic – gained incidentally by the individuals. Al-Adhab asserted that career planning was very important for women who are transitioning from traditional roles of housewives to educated working professionals with multiple responsibilities, transitioning expectations, and new experiences. Al-Adhab found that a) little formal career planning occurred either during or previous to women's college or university experience; b) women from larger cities and women with older

sisters had greater career opportunities c) young women in the UAE were in need of career education to prepare them for future careers to enable women to contribute to society in a chosen occupation, yet retaining traditional Islamic philosophy and values.

Parental involvement.

Al-Taneiji (2001) discussed the effects of parental involvement in the success of their children in primary and secondary school in the UAE. The study described two kinds of parental involvement as a) parenting at home and b) participating in school related activities. The author found that most parents were involved very little in their children's primary or secondary school experience as evidenced by the following observations: a) few parents responded to correspondence from schools whether official or unofficial; b) few parents helped their children with their work at home due mostly to low levels of parental education; c) as children got older, parents preferred the children to be independent encouraging the children to seek assistance from their peers; d) parents participated in school activities selectively, i.e. high participation in celebrations, but low participation in lectures or presentations; e) parents were rarely involved in the school decision-making process and rarely assisted schools to gain support from community resources; and f) low parental involvement occurred in both distinguished schools (with high performance levels) and non-distinguished (with satisfactory performance levels) leading the researcher to conclude that parental involvement made little difference in the academic performance of children.

Self-confidence and self-perception.

Almegta (1996) reported on a study of 300 female Emirati students at the UAE University at Al-Ain which investigated the relationships between self-efficacy, self-

evaluation, causal attribution, and emotions. The author found that most students and teachers were on target when asked about students' past performances in their courses. However, students tended to be pessimistic or highly uncertain about their future performances on exams or the final grade in the course while teachers predicted students' performance accurately. Students also tended to attribute anticipated success or failure to uncontrollable factors such as the difficulty of the exam rather than controllable factors such as the amount of student preparation. Almegta attributed the seeming pessimism or uncertainty of academic performance in female students as evidence of self-efficacy or low self-esteem.

In contrast, Al-Darmaki (1998) conducted a study of female students at the UAE University examining their self-esteem and moods and found that, according to the indicators in the study, the participants had high self-esteem and were not depressed. As noted previously (Althen, 1978; Bagnole, 1977, Helms, 1978; Sulaiman, 2001), cultural factors explained much of the discrepancy in the findings of the two studies. Within the Islamic tradition, Muslims are taught to attribute successes to God for guidance or assistance rather than to themselves. Attributing successes to oneself is perceived by many Muslims as a form of arrogance that constitutes a sin and can cause the blessing to be taken away from the success. Most Muslims use phrases to attribute successes or the outcomes of future events to God. Common phrases used by Muslims include: a) "inshallah" which means "if God wills" to indicate that he or she is planning to do something in the future, b) "alhumdulillah" which means "praise be to God" when stating something positive about themselves, and c) "bismillah" which means "in the name of

God” before eating, drinking, or beginning any task. In the Arab and Muslim cultures, understating one’s abilities is more acceptable than overstating one’s abilities.

Segregated education

Perry (2000) discussed the renewed interest in single-sex educational institutions. Perry described recent research findings indicating that single-sex women’s colleges which recognize the distinct pattern of women’s lives and assist women in making a full contribution in the economy without losing traditional feminine strengths. According to the study, women and girls perform better in key subjects like math, science, and technology; have more opportunities to observe positive female role models, and enhance the development of self-confidence and self-esteem in women and girls when they study with women.

Contemporary Issues Affecting Emirati Women's Post-Secondary Education

Social and economic changes in the UAE.

As the society developed rapidly in only three generations from being an isolated, semi-nomadic, society in which most people were illiterate, to a global player in areas including cyber-business, travel, and tourism, the society experienced dramatic changes which have not been fully understood by Emirati people. Foreign workers and teachers had to be imported to manage the rapidly growing economy and to educate UAE nationals in the early stages. But the economy continued to grow so fast that by the beginning of the 21st century around 80% of the population of the UAE were resident expatriate workers (United Arab Emirates, 2005, People, para 1). Culturally, the UAE society experienced many transitions caused by the rapidly changing economy and influx of expatriate workers.

Women and social change.

When asked, Emirati women defined themselves and their society in terms of their Islamic identity according to Khatib (1994). The study “Beyond the mysterious and exotic: Women of the Emirates (and I) assess their lives and society” examined how Emirati women perceived themselves and the social changes that took place up to the mid-1990s. Women discussed the escalating societal problems such as divorce, HIV aids in the local population, and so on as a failing of members of society, particularly the men, in obeying fundamental Islamic teachings. Women wanted to improve the situation through an Islamic discussion not through political discussions of freedom and equality. Women were concerned about the new expectations and behaviors being adopted in the rapidly developing society as well as issues related to education, male-female relationships, and employment. In general, women believed that the burden of responsibility of development in Emirati society had fallen to the women who have taken up the challenge in many forms. Women were leaving the home to go to work, postponing marriage to get a higher education, having fewer children because women had many responsibilities outside the home, using domestic help to assist them in childcare and routine housework.

Khabib (1994) stated that the women’s main concern was that as women assumed the additional roles of responsibility, pressure was lifted from the men, an alarming situation for the women. For example, as women outnumbered men in post-secondary education and increasingly began working outside the home, men opted out of obtaining a post-secondary education and chose occupations requiring a few months of training instead such as military or police with limited advancement potential. The social

problems resulting have become visible. Women preferred to have husbands with higher educations and husbands with jobs bringing in higher salaries because the men in Emirati society were considered the heads of the families and accorded corresponding respect. Although women assumed more responsibilities in assisting in providing income and in making decisions backed by the money they earned, women still had primary responsibility for household matters, childcare concerns, and traditionally female matters of concern. Men did not reciprocate by assuming additional roles or assisting women in traditionally female responsibilities.

Khatib (1994) explains that the slight advantage that men have in Islamic societies was linked directly to the males' responsibility to provide for the financial and security needs of the family and in the UAE men are legally responsible for the financial maintenance for their wives and other female family members. Working women could not be compelled, or even expected, to contribute to the family finances as such an expectation could be considered as a shame for their husbands. So, Emirati men often preferred their wives to remain at home, manage the family, and care for their children as they perceived their wives' income of little importance but coming at the great expense of a harmonious family life and time spent with children.

Emirati cultural values were considered important to Emirati men as well. Alsawad (1991) conducted a study examining the likelihood of male Emirati students studying in the US to adopt western values. The author found that although the males experienced some enculturation and modification of values during their stay abroad, most men would revert back to their traditional values upon return to the UAE.

Students in the Communication Technology Department of one of the federally funded post-secondary educational institutions produced a periodical called Desert Dawn in which issues important to female students were explored and published. According to the managing editor, Maryam AlSerkal, a student in the Communications Technology Department:

The courage that was displayed in researching and writing the articles in this issue [and all the issues] is a great tribute to the young, creative intellect of Emirati women. We need more of these gutsy young women to sculpt readers' minds and to bring to light many of the issues that affect our society but have been kept silent. (1999, p. 1)

The following examples illustrated some of the issues related to the changing society considered important to women participating in post-secondary education.

Maryam AlSerkal (1999) discussed censorship in the UAE. AlSerkal stated that the Information Act prohibited publication of any material "related to categories which are seen to impose a threat to the peace and stability of the country" such as "criticism of the President and any rulers . . . or comments pertaining to the private and family secrets of individuals, even if they are true" (p. 4). The irony, according to AlSerkal, was that the law applied only to material produced and published within the UAE not to imported material setting up "the absurd situation where only the ignorant [can] criticize, while the informed can not" (p. 4). AlSerkal explained, "local views are being censored . . . while foreign views . . . often lacking in understanding of local values are being published without any reservations" (p. 4). AlSerkal supported the call of the UAE's Minister of Information and Media to minimize the censorship in the UAE so that "people who know

and respect our national values [can] speak their minds in a civilized manner to allow for improvement" in the UAE (p. 4).

Ayesha Butti (1999) wrote on the lives of women in Dubai's Women's Prison. Butti and colleagues toured the facility and were surprised to find a pleasant environment and friendly staff. Among the prisoners interviewed were prostitutes, some with babies from Emirati men; a woman sentenced to death for drug trafficking; and a 15-year old Emirati runaway whose "fiancé" claimed he did not know her when she was caught to avoid being "forced" to marry her. The stories of the female prisoners were heart-wrenching for the reporters and prompted the author to state: "The changes in Dubai are not a comfortable topic of discussion for many people. As we get more educated and worldly, our traditional values do not guarantee our safety anymore" (p. 16).

Maram AlDoei and Maryam AlSerkal (1999) interviewed and wrote about abused women. The reporters took "an in-depth look at a growing plague that is hidden behind closed doors . . . an epidemic that is rarely talked about openly" (p. 22). The reporters concluded by stating: "There is always a way out, but she must have the courage to face her problems. The law is there to protect her if she finds herself trapped" (p. 23).

Several articles relating to marriage appeared in issues of Desert Dawn from 1999-2002. Afaf Mohammad (1999) conducted an interview with Dr. Moza Gabash, a female psychologist who has written books on issues relating to the changing culture in the UAE. Dr. Gabash described the dilemma for Emirati women caused by the changing marriage patterns in the UAE, "The introduction of some foreign concepts to our Islamic and Arabic culture [such as delaying marriage or having extramarital relationships] contributes to the dilemma" (p. 24). As a result, "Illegitimate relationships became a

normality among men . . . mostly between UAE national men and foreign women . . . because the responsibility in such relationships is very limited” (p. 24). The only solution for UAE national women “is to stay clean.” Dr. Gabash explained, “society often contributes to the problem [because] society doesn’t look favorably on girls who remain single. . . the man can ask for the hand of a women, but the girl can’t. The man can decide when to get married, but the girl can’t” (p. 25). Dr. Gabash concluded, “let’s stop putting obstacles in the way of young men seeking marriage and help solve this problem” (p. 25).

Hosani (2001) describes one of the problems alluded to by Dr. Gabash, the high cost of getting married. Since the discovery of oil, Emirati families have been spending extravagant amounts on weddings. According to Mrs. Wedad Lootah, a family advisor at the Dubai Courts, “the pressure comes mostly from the family of the bride, which wants to show off the wealth of the groom” (p. 4). Mrs. Lootah continued, “the groom would often get loans just to cover the high wedding expenses – and that leads to many serious problems after the wedding” (p. 4). Sometimes the family of the bride requested a huge dowry and expensive jewelry for the wedding party. The groom, in an effort not to lose face, may be forced to take loans from different banks to satisfy all of the bride’s family’s demands. In the end, a man with a modest salary may have difficulty paying back all the loans let alone provide for his new family. In response, the government created the Marriage Fund “to serve the UAE society and to ease social problems like the increasing numbers of unmarried Emirati women, high dowries, and [Emirati men] marrying foreign women. The marriage fund gives Emirati men who marry Emirati women a gift of AED 70,000 (roughly \$19,000). In addition, as Badriah AlKhouri (2002) reported, mass

weddings have been sponsored by the government to “help [men] by decreasing the amount of money they spend on their wedding parties” (p. 14).

Women and politics.

Al-Oraimi (2004) explored the relationship between women's political rights and role in the economic development process in the UAE from 1982 to 2002. Al-Oraimi asserted that Emirati women were integrated into the public life as employees but had limited access to top government positions. The study examined cultural factors such as religion, traditions, and customs, as well as, constitutional laws which influenced the nature of women's political involvement. In summary, five themes emerged: a) women's participation in the modern labor force did not push them toward political activity; b) introduction of oil wealth and modernization upset the balance in the traditional cultural roles of men and women prevalent in the tribal-based Bedouin society creating a form of neopatriarchy in which women lost political influence; c) barriers for women due to the neopatriarchy in politics was not present in the labor force; d) women in the UAE preferred to take part in politics through their social groups rather than on an individual basis; and e) Oriami asserted that "in order for any advancement to take place, women need to empower themselves from within, as a collective movement and as individuals, as well as recognize their potential as a social, economic, and political power" (p. iii). Al-Oraimi added that "some women in the UAE are still unaware of the influence and the potential disadvantages of the systematic division of gender on their lives in short and long terms" (pp. 3-4). Further, Al-Oraimi stated, "the importance of the study lies in its scarcity as it provides a comprehensive overview about women in the UAE [and] it is the first to expose women's political rights for discussion" (p. 10).

Female images in the media.

Lootah (1999) explored the levels of meanings embedded in the images represented of women, television anchors in particular, on Dubai (UAE) TV. The author described the feminine position in Islam and how it is understood and articulated, especially in the tradition of intellectual Islam, as well as colonialism and neo-colonialism. The woman's position in Islam is complementary to man's position, not subordinate. Women in Islam are viewed as pillars of the family and of the society. Women are to be respected, provided for financially, and protected from harm by the men. In Islam, the relationship between husband and wife is a sacred union designed to promote the emotional and sexual satisfaction of both partners and both partners are expected to be faithful to each other. Lusting after a person who is not a spouse is a form of sin to be avoided. Therefore, Muslim men and women should dress and act modestly in public so as not to attract sexual attention or cause sexual stimulation in others. However, Lootah found that the images of women on Dubai TV were loaded with Western, rather than Arab/Islamic codes. The female body was treated as a material object presented for the viewing pleasure of the audience not just in Western movies, as may be expected, but on programs produced locally by Dubai TV.

Al-Dhaheri (1998) examined the growing practice introduced by the West of using sexually stimulating images of women in the popular Arab music videos. Although contrary to Islamic teachings, using sexual representations of women in Arab music videos has grown in popularity in the Gulf region since 1990. Al-Dhaheri asserted that the study was important because of the rarity of published Arab women's studies. The study's four areas of inquiry were: a) How do Arab music videos represent women? b)

How do Arab audiences read and interpret these images? c) How do producers who work with these videos interpret these images of women? and d) How do Arab female performers interpret their images and roles in Arab music videos? Al-Dhaheri found that both women and men in Arab culture perceived women's bodies as a beautiful, yet dangerous seduction tools with each part of the body significant in some sexual aspect. Producers, aware of that perception, purposefully used sexually stimulating images of women in Arab music videos to exploit the sexual stereotypes of women in promoting performers, music, and videos. Male and female performers, Muslim and non-Muslim, acknowledged the use of the female sexual stereotypes but asserted that it was necessary in order to compete in the entertainment field.

Al-Dhaheri (1998) stated that women appearing in music videos without Islamic covering symbolized for some, particularly Westerners, that the Arab world was modernizing and that women were becoming more equal to men. Al-Dhaheri (1998) disagreed, citing that the opposite was true. The video image stereotypes portrayed women as sexual objects for the enjoyment of men, objects to be looked at by men, performers to entice men and promote lustful feelings in men. Al-Dhaheri pointed out that certain traditional aspects of Arab and Muslim womanhood elevated women from objects to important participants in society such as the roles of the trusted wife, nurturer and educator of children; the peacemaker between family members; the pillar of stability and center of the family; and the respected elder.

The Education Related Experiences of Arab or Muslim Women outside the UAE

Arab and/or Muslim women in western countries.

Ahmad (2001) reported on motivations for Muslim women of southern Asian origin living in the UK to participate in post-secondary education. Ahmad found that among the women interviewed, entering higher education was viewed as important for gaining and maintaining social prestige. Secondary motivations were parental encouragement, independence, and personal satisfaction. Additionally, Ahmad stated that through the post-secondary education process, the participants defined and re-defined themselves in terms of cultural, religious, and personal identities creating, at times, internal conflicts. The findings of Basit (1997) in “I want more freedom, but not too much: British Muslim girls and the dynamism of family values,” supported Ahmad’s findings. Basit found that British Muslim girls experienced ambiguous messages from families about the amount of freedom the young women could experience and to what extent the young women should experience the various aspects of British and Asian/Muslim identities.

Archer (2002) discussed views expressed by adolescent Muslim boys and girls living in Britain concerning Muslim girls’ post-secondary education and subsequent employment. The study found that boys described the Muslim girls’ participation in post-secondary education and work as being a matter of parental choice, whereas, the Muslim girls described the choices as more personal concerning post-secondary education and subsequent work resulting from changes in society.

Muslim women in Arab Countries.

Nashif (2000) reported that technical education is more effective than general education in improving Arab women's upward social mobility, i.e. transitioning from domestic roles to professionals in the chosen field with an independent income. Nashif

stated that huge gender disparities existed in education and subsequent employment of women in the Arab world in terms of enrollment and in the nature of the fields of education. In developing, industrializing and modernizing societies, technological education gave Arab women more opportunities to market the skills leading to increased income and increased social mobility. A technological education led to technological employment which facilitated the transition of Arab women from the domestic to the public spheres and enabled Arab women to better articulate their needs and enact changes in their social situations and weakened the patriarchal system that inhibited Arab women's upward social mobility.

Although Nashif's conclusions seemed logical, none of the references reflected experiences of women in Arab counties. One reference was about Muslim women's experiences in Nigeria, a country with a high percentage of Muslim women, but whose experience was radically different from Arab and Muslim women in Gulf region.

Educational issues for women in Jordanian.

Rabo (2000) reported on a study comparing essays written by Swedish, Jordanian, and Syrian students. The essays reflected that students from the two Arab countries viewed individual contributions to national development as a high priority for gaining a higher education. Students from the Arab countries wanted to obtain higher educational degrees rather than vocational degrees but believed that sufficient jobs suited to their educational aspirations were not available in their countries.

Nimer (1989) discussed ways that adults in Jordan, particularly women, have been recruited and retained in adult education programs. These ways included: a) using religious and social leaders' influence to encourage adult participation in educational

activities; b) door-to-door canvassing; c) organizing field trips to desirable sites as incentives; d) providing financial incentives to participants; e) forming committees to deal with religious, social, educational, and child care issues involving women's participation; f) using religious committees to recruit adults; g) using women to visit other women and explain about educational opportunities; h) using guest speakers discussing the value of education; i) holding annual exhibitions to display adult students' work; and j) hiring teachers qualified to teach subject matter and trained in teaching adults.

Shakhatreh (1991) reported that the most important factors in determining female participation in the labor force were found to be education, marital status, and religion. Women who had at least a secondary education and were not married at the time of the study were the most likely to be employed. Muslim women were less likely to be employed than non-Muslim women. Other significant variables were the presence of school-age children in the home, the presence of other women aged 15 or older in the home, and the income of other wage earners in the home.

Tubbeh (1994) conducted a study which addressed the determinants of women's economic activities in three communities in Jordan. The results indicated that age, marital status, a person available for childcare, and total household income were the most significant variables with segregation – women working separately from men – also a significant variable. Women working outside the house were more likely to be older; married, divorced, or widowed, have family members available to care for younger children, and have low income earning spouse or no spouse. Tubbeh recommended that to increase the number of women in the workforce, child care facilities should be

established in the community and agencies should be established to create marketing opportunities for women who desire to work only at home due to cultural barriers.

Educational issues relating to women in Egypt.

Brink (1986) studied the effects of education and employment on rural women in Egypt who lived in an area which was rapidly undergoing modernization. Brink found the following: a) most Egyptian women in the rural community she studied were housewives and their status in the community was determined by their age and number of children born to them; b) Women who earned money outside the home in traditional occupations or education did not experience an increase in status; c) Women who moved into nuclear family units with their husbands when they got married or shortly after did experience an increase in status as reflected by their more egalitarian relationship with their husbands; and d) women who were both educated and worked outside the home in modern occupations were the only women in the community who could live in nuclear families, develop egalitarian relationships with their husbands, and escape the constraints imposed by the traditional honor and shame codes.

Educational issues for women in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

In Lebanon, the education of girls and women has not accomplished the "anticipated social transformation, especially the socially constructed patriarchal ideology which places them as primary providers of biological and sexual services and unpaid labor" (Lattouf, 1999, p. 12). Lattouf mentioned the following points in support of her thesis:

1. "Although there has been a tremendous increase of women attending universities, participating in the labor force and the political sphere, there is little change in the way society views women, as 'wives and mothers'" (p. 13).
2. Most women pursue careers considered traditionally female careers.
3. "When efforts are made to change harmful laws and customs, women are accused of creating divisions in their communities and being unfaithful to their people and traditions" (p. 13).
4. In the 1990s, government policies such as reinforcing gender roles in the educational system were enacted which "seemed to push women back in the home" (p. 13).
5. Religious authorities reinforced the strict division of labor and gender roles between the sexes in Lebanon.

Al-Arifi (1994) conducted a study which compared the career maturity, achievement motivation, and self-esteem of female college students in two very different Middle Eastern cultures: Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. The study concluded that Lebanese women had a higher level of career maturity than the Saudi women resulting from more career exploration opportunities and more educational opportunities. The Saudi women were highly motivated to achieve but were confused about what success in education would achieve in their lives.

The researcher did not find the expected differences in achievement motivation and self-esteem between Lebanese and Saudi students. As Al-Arifi noted, Arab women tended to assess self-worth by their place in the family not by individual achievements or occupations. Al-Arifi concluded by recommending that both countries establish better

career development practices at the post-secondary level to create a better awareness of the opportunities available to women of each country and what it takes to take advantage of the existing opportunities.

Alajmi (2001) examined the experiences of 39 Saudi women working as managers and decision-makers in organizations. The method consisted of a discussion of Muslim women, Muslim women's roles, career opportunities available to Muslim women, and the impact of Islam on many areas of Muslim women's lives in Saudi Arabia. Topics included women's roles in the family, women's roles in public life, and societal factors that have influenced Saudi women in career roles. Commonalities in the participants experience were listed. All were raised in traditional two-parent homes in the upper class, where a strong emphasis was placed on education. The majority of the women in the study had some experience and expertise in the fields and held graduate degrees; mostly doctorates. Most were married and had three or four children. The majority of the married women indicated that the husband's support was a critical factor in the ability to seek and attain challenging positions.

Samergandi (1992) examined the factors that contributed to the discrepancy between the high number of women receiving college education and the low number of women participating in the labor force in Saudi Arabia as Saudi Arabia is the largest employer of foreign labor in the world. The author found that the factors that limited women's participation in the work force were: a) women perceived the roles as wives and mothers as more important than careers; b) Saudi women's motivations for achieving educational goals were not necessarily related to having a career; c) lack of economic need before the 1980s recession in Saudi Arabia; d) absence of employment opportunities

(women's jobs were saturated); e) limited fields of education for women which included only education, social work, and medicine; and most importantly, and f) religious restraints. Recommendations for increasing women's participation in the workforce included carpooling, better public transportation for women, and establishing childcare facilities.

Educational issues for women in Yemen.

Al-Haziazi (1992) conducted a study investigating the attitudes of government employees toward women's employment as a way to explain the low participation of women in the Yemeni paid labor force. Al-Haziazi found that both men and women government employees had either a neutral opinion about women in the workforce or an only slightly negative opinion. Rather the factors that created the most obstacles for women in employment were: a) obtaining guardian approval, b) lack of childcare facilities, c) religious interpretation and understanding, d) social values, and e) low educational levels. Al-Haziazi added that there was evidence through the study and others that the attitudes about women's employment was shifting toward greater tolerance.

Summary of Literature Review

This literature review described the context of this study; gave important background information about the UAE and Emirati people; explained important issues affecting Emirati women's post-secondary education; and explained issues affecting the post-secondary education of Arab and Muslim women outside the Emirates. This researcher used mostly academic resources in this literature review but supplemented with popular resources on important topics when academic sources could not be found.

The researcher pointed out that the limited existing information available about Arab and Muslim women's education experiences was found by the researcher to be often misused when quoted by others or misleading when used in statistical representations.

Issues highlighted in the Education For all (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2003) were used as a framework to develop questions, report evidence, and discuss responses. The main obstacles to female participation in post-secondary education, according to the report were: a) household dynamics; b) working children; c) traditional practices such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy; d) HIV Aids, Conflict, and disability; e) decent and free schools; f) trained staff and female role models; and g) educational representation of females in the workplace. The report listed ways that governments could assist women in attaining a post-secondary education and maximizing the benefits of a post-secondary education once it had been attained. Governments could a) play a leading role in promoting an equal education by enacting legal reforms and providing adequate educational facilities for girls and women; b) defray the costs of education so that educating girls was not a burden to families; and c) empower women by making women a part of the political decision-making process (pp. 12-16).

A report prepared by the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth and presented at the International Conference on Education in Geneva in September 2001 illustrated problems with the educational system in the UAE public schools and set proposed solutions to the problems presented. The report did not distinguish between obstacles to girls and obstacles to boys as the problems were the same: a) sources of knowledge – materials and techniques needed to educate students in the first decade of the 21st century differed greatly from the previous decade and even more from two decades previous and

were unfamiliar to teachers and parents; b) facilities – new facilities had to be built to accommodate the growing population; c) non-Arab or non-Muslim housemaids; d) rapidly developing technology; e) changes in demographics; f) globalization – set up a condition in which the public schools' curriculum had to be flexible enough to accommodate global issues while still maintaining national unity and cultural values; and g) changes in culture and values – public schools had to develop ways incorporate technology including the internet into the curriculum while protecting students from influences considered inappropriate in the UAE society.

The researcher described the UAE and the Emirati people. The UAE an oil-rich country in the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, about the size of South Carolina, was a federation of seven city-states. The population in 2004 was about 2.5 million people with 80% of the population being expatriate workers and families. Most of the UAE nationals were Arabs and the official religion of the UAE was Islam with nearly, if not all, UAE nationals, Muslims. In 2004, expatriate workers made up about 90% of the workforce resulting in an unemployment rate upwards of 16% among UAE nationals. As a result, the government of the UAE put an “Emiratization” policy in place to encourage or “force”, if necessary, companies in the private sector to employ more UAE nationals.

Since federation, the UAE government used its oil wealth to invest heavily social programs designed to improve the living standard of Emirati people, educate citizens of every age to be literate and knowledgeable about the outside world; create a infrastructure capable of supporting a modern nation; and diversity the economy. As a result, the economy grew more rapidly than the local workforce accommodate necessitating the import of large numbers of expatriate workers at an early state in

national development. The influx of expatriate workers caused a rapid transformation of pre-existing cultural beliefs and practices causing Emiratis to examine their society and themselves.

The changing roles of men and women in Emirati society led to opportunities for women to study and work but have created problems in society. As women obtained degrees and began working, men were relieved from much of the responsibility that was previously expected of them from society. Women found themselves with the dual roles of breadwinner and homemaker with little assistance from spouses. Women often viewed the social problems as a failing of Emirati men to follow religious teachings. Women preferred expressing political views in women's organizations, rather than individually. Arab and Muslim women in countries outside the UAE faced problems similar to Emirati women but overcame those problems with differing degrees of success.

All of the issues discussed or explained in this literature review were important to understand and interpret the responses of the participants. Many of the issues and examples contained in this literature review are revisited in Chapter 5 as the participants' responses are discussed.

Chapter III: Methodology

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to report, examine, and interpret accurately the post-secondary education experiences of seven Emirati women from their own point of view in the year 2004. The study focused on four areas of interest: a) to what extent were the challenges to female participation in education identified by UNESCO (“Gender,” 2003) experienced by the participants; b) perceived benefits of participating in post-secondary education; c) challenges faced in utilizing the full potential of the perceived benefits of post-secondary education; and d) means of overcoming the challenges in participating in post-secondary education and utilizing the full potential of the perceived benefits.

Description of Participants

A purposeful sample of seven Emirati women who had participated in post-secondary education for at least one year were interviewed for the study. Open-ended questions were used. Although an effort was made to include participants with varying experiences, all participants who volunteered for the study were single, had no children, and attended public colleges or universities in the UAE. Participants did have a degree of diversity in a) ethnicity (mothers from outside the UAE), b) socio-economic status, and c) post-secondary institutions and programs, d) locations with the UAE (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah), and d) life experiences such as travel, work experience, group or club membership, and so on.

A request for participants was posted on a website frequented by Emirati students. The request for participants stated: a) female students or former students were needed to give information regarding experiences on post-secondary education in the UAE; b) the

information would be valuable to understanding the important role of education in the future of the UAE; and c) the information would remain confidential.

Potential participants indicating an interest in participating in the study were sent more detailed information about the study, the researcher, and benefits of participating in the study. Potential participants completed a short preliminary interview via internet instant text messaging. The responses to the preliminary interview were used to construct profiles and select the participants with a variety of experiences. Seven female students answered the call for participants so all seven were included in the study. Responses to the initial questions were used as a basis for developing subsequent interview questions.

Protection of Human Subjects

Initially, the researcher gained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Ball State University on an expedited review as voice recording was an identifiable means of preservation of interviews. Informed consent forms were prepared and sent to the first three potential participants by email. The potential participants specifically did not want their voice or image recorded or their identity revealed in any way. The potential participants were instructed by email sign the form, fax the form back, or scan the form and email the attachment back to the researcher. The first two potential participants asked questions similar to: a) Who will read these forms? b) Who will know I signed the form? c) Why do you want me to sign a form with my real name when you tell me that my information will be confidential? d) Why do you want me to sign the form with my real name when you asked me to choose a made-up name for the interviews? Only one form was returned and two potential participants were not

available afterward. This researcher dropped the option to record voice or image evidence, informed the IRB of the problem, and asked for an exempt status without an informed consent form. The exempt status was granted.

Description of Instrumentation / Measurement Procedures

The qualitative method was used to maximize the opportunity for participants to relate experiences important to them from their own perspective. So, each round of interview questions was developed from responses to previous questions. The researcher analyzed each round of questions and made notes about themes to discuss in the subsequent interview to gain more specific or in-depth information or to clarify or supplement the responses to previous responses to gain richer evidence, but allowed the interview to unfold according to the responses of the participants. The researcher acted as a guide and prompter to keep the interview going smoothly and obtain evidence on the desired topics.

As each participant volunteered and agreed to the study, broad initial questions were asked of each participant targeting areas described in the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report and other sources detailed in the literature review of this study. After the broad question was asked and the participant gave her initial response, the researcher subtly asked for clarifications and examples. Then the researcher typically gave another opportunity to address the question. The following are examples of the broad initial questions and the areas that were being targeted in the questions.

1. Please tell me about your family. Targeted issues included household dynamics, educational level of family members, working family members, significant influences in the lives of participants.

2. Please tell me about the decision-making process that led to you going to college or university. Targeted issues included a description of the decision-making process that led the participants to participate in post-secondary education as well as any issues related to the decision not previously considered by the researcher.
3. Please tell me about your primary and secondary school experience. Targeted issues included determining whether a participant went to public or private school and adequacy of preparation at the secondary level as a factor of post-secondary educational preparation and issues identified as obstacles in the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report.
4. Please tell me about your college or university experience. Targeted issues included issues identified as obstacles in the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report and any other issues not previously considered by the researcher.
5. Please tell me about the things you do outside school. (Tell me about your hobbies or about the things you like to do in your spare time.) Targeted issues included determining whether the participant had extra instruction outside the formal education system and to open the door to follow up questions from previous sessions.
6. Please tell me about the process leading to marriage in the UAE. Targeted issues included determining the impact of marriage on the ability of the participants to participate in post-secondary education or realize the benefits of a post-secondary education.

7. Please tell me about jobs that are suitable for women in the UAE. Targeted issues included obtaining the participants' perspectives of the likelihood of realizing the perceived benefits to participation in post-secondary education.
8. Please tell me about your life's dream. (What would you do after you finish college if you could do anything you wanted to?)
 - a. Follow up question: Please describe things that you think will help you achieve your dream.
 - b. Follow up question: Please tell me about things that could make achieving your dream difficult. Targeted issues included getting a feel for dreams and desires of the participants compared to what they actually thought they could achieve.

The following is a sample of the technique from the evidence of a participant. Zainab was asked to tell about her college experience. Zainab mentioned many aspects of her college experience and commented favorably about many teachers. This researcher wanted to obtain contrasting information to determine Zainab's criteria for being a good teacher.

- Researcher: Can you tell me about a teacher who was not doing such a good job?
- Zainab: [Zainab used a text messaging abbreviation “lol” which stands for “laughing out loud” indicating that she was giggling or found the question amusing.] One of my Information Technology teachers was horrible.
- Researcher: In what ways?
- Zainab: [again, Zainab indicated “lol”.] In terms of treating people and teaching us as well.

Researcher: Can you give me an example?

Zainab: He was an English teacher but the college was training teachers to multi-task [actually, teachers were being cross-trained in an attempt to integrate English more in the content courses]. It seemed like he started teaching Information Technology only last year. It [his teaching style] was very old fashioned.

Researcher: In what way was his style old fashioned?

Zainab: He would ask us to put the laptop lid down in an Information Technology class which was pretty useless because you had to follow the teacher's steps. Information Technology lessons are supposed to be practical lessons in which we can find out what our mistakes are. Instead, he always asked us to just listen and watch. It was so boring and horrible.

The preceding interviewing technique allowed for rich and descriptive responses and encouraged without leading the participants. The preceding interviewing techniques and other techniques used in this study are recommended by Spradly (1979) as effective interviewing techniques used in conducting ethnographic interviews.

Analysis of the evidence consisted three steps. Step one consisted of preparing the responses for presentation. As follow up questions and clarifying questions were asked in different parts of interviews or in consecutive interviews, grouping of evidence based on topic was necessary to coherently present the responses. Step two consisted of analyzing each interview by sorting the information into groupings related to their relevance to the research questions. Key ideas, themes, and conclusions were noted along with evidence from the presentation of responses when necessary for clarification.

Step three consisted of comparing the key ideas, themes, and conclusions as well as contradictions among the seven sets of responses and themes that emerged from the literature review.

As an example, refer to the preceding example in which Zainab described not-so-good teachers. By obtaining contrasting information about a subject, the researcher was able to determine the participant's criteria for making the judgment of being a "good teacher" or a "not-so-good" teacher. Zainab described a good teacher in the following way (See chapter four): a) uses modern techniques, b) uses examples and encourages students to participate in the instruction, c) knows the subject matter very well, d) is interesting, and e) has practical lessons. By contrast, a not-so-good teacher a) uses "old-fashioned" techniques, b) does not encourage students to participate, but rather asks students to "put the laptop lid down in an IT class," c) does not know the subject material well, d) is boring, and e) has useless lessons. In addition, Zainab described her public primary and secondary school experience in nearly the same terms (See chapter four) using the adjectives "useless," "boring," and "old-fashioned." By grouping together the commonalities, comparing, and contrasting, the researcher was able to isolate important themes and make appropriate and accurate conclusions.

After each interview, the researcher saved the text message, converted the text of the interview from the messaging format to MSWord format with the pseudo name. Participants were given the opportunity to review the converted files to clarify responses. The interview evidence provided in this study reflects any clarifications made by participants.

The ethnographic style qualitative method was chosen for this study for three important reasons:

1. The ethnographic style qualitative method of interviewing employed in this study gave participants the greatest latitude to give responses important to them from their own perspective and gave an avenue to participants to give responses that were not previously considered by this researcher.
2. Academic literature on any topic for the UAE was scarce and research pertaining to female students' perspective of the post-secondary educational experience could not be found as was demonstrated in the literature review for this study. Therefore, this study contributes valuable evidence which can be used by local and expatriate educators and policy makers in understanding female students' perspectives about their post-secondary educational experience and can serve as a foundation for subsequent qualitative and quantitative studies.
3. Development of rapport and trust was essential to this study. The nature of Emirati society was intensely private regarding personal issues. Emirati men and women were segregated in nearly all areas of life and Emirati women, in particular, were not easily accessible to outsiders. In addition, all participants attended government-sponsored colleges or universities free of charge, so they were neither eager to be perceived as criticizing the government nor to be perceived as ungrateful for a "free" education.

Research Design

The data collection consisted of interviewing seven Emirati women who participated in post-secondary education in the UAE for at least one year using the

ethnographic qualitative method described in Spradley (1979). Three to four interviews were conducted with 6 participants over a period of 6 weeks approximately 3 or 4 days apart. One participant dropped out after the preliminary interview and one regular interview. It is not known if she dropped out of the study voluntarily or was not allowed to continue. The researcher considered the evidence given by the participant valuable so the evidence was included in this work even though the participant did not complete the interview sequence.

The interviews took place using internet instant text messaging because all participants did not wish their image or voice to be identifiable due to religious, social, or personal reasons. One hour interviews were scheduled but the actual times varied according to the participants' willingness to answer questions or time constraints of the participants. The interviews took place via internet text messaging sessions. The amount of evidence gained during each hour of text messaging was considerably less than could be obtained in an oral interview. The participants were giving information by keyboarding in their non-native language which was considerably time consuming for most of them. Using English as the medium of communication was considered appropriate since the medium of instruction in all public post-secondary institutions is English. The researcher, although not a native speaker, is reasonably fluent in Arabic and translated words or phrases occasionally used by the participants. The initial interview discussions acquainted participants with the purpose of the questioning, and their right to decide what information to share. Participants were informed that the information supplied would be used in a research work. Explanations were given of ways their

experiences would be helpful to other Emirati women, as well as, teachers and decision-makers in the UAE.

The general questions asked in the first round interviews allowed the researcher to get to know the students and their experiences. From the responses of each round of questions, more in-depth and focused questions were developed. After the interviewing process was finished, the results were written and compared to identify themes and commonalities. This researcher kept a multi-part journal during the research process to record the procedure of the study, to record ideas for future action, and to provide a record of the researcher's learning.

Chapter IV: Participant Evidence

Introduction

The participant interviews contained in the following cases represent seven unique Emirati women's personal experiences. The interview evidence is presented using the broad categories based on the important topics discussed in the literature review and based on the responses of each participant. Categories include general information, description of family, descriptions of leisure time, description of the decision-making processes that led to participation in post-secondary education, description of high school experience, description of college experience, description of work experience, and discussion of education and work related issues. The cases are presented from most informative to the least informative.

The evidence is presented in a flowing narrative format with only clarifications added by the researcher. The participants largely decided how much information to give on each broad topic, thereby, emphasizing and expanding on topics that interested them or on topics that they thought were important.

Case 1: Zainab

Zainab was the sixth participant to volunteer for the research project. Zainab did not want her voice or image recorded, so text messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Zainab was a third year Business student studying at a federally funded post-secondary institution in Dubai. She was 19 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was approximately 6 hours.

Zainab was eager to participate in the research and to interact with the researcher as demonstrated by her closing statements. “It was my pleasure really. I like to interact with people from different countries. I wish you all the best and hope you visit the UAE inshallah.”

Zainab described herself, her family, and the decision making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education.

I have two brothers and three sisters, four of which went off to different [federally funded post-secondary institutions]. Two brothers graduated from the men’s college, one sister from [a women’s college] in Al Ain, and the other sister from [a women’s college] in Dubai.

One brother is a mechanical engineer, like my dad, and the other is an electronics engineer. They are both working in Dubai Aluminum Company. My dad is in the police. Both of my sisters studied Information Technology. They are both continuing their higher education now. My oldest sister graduated from a university in Al Ain and she works for the Ministry of Finance. My mother is a housewife and is not a high school graduate. She stopped in middle school.

I think the environment that I grew up in helped me a lot, considering my mother is from India. She was very determined to teach us English ever since we were young. She used to teach me English alphabets by herself. Here in the government schools at that time, English wasn't taught until you were in fourth grade. She helped me with math too in my early school stages.

I also preferred watching English cartoons and series, listening to English songs, reading lyrics, for example, and trying to translate them was very beneficial for me. I love languages in general. I have been to India and speak Indian, my "mother's tongue," and a little Italian as well.

My mom told me that when she first came to the UAE, it was only a desert. There was sand everywhere, no high buildings and just small shops. [She said that] women probably only studied Quran in the mosques near their houses. There was no question of them [working as the only work available at the time was] fishing or pearl diving with men of course. But now it is very different. There are schools, colleges, and universities for women all over [the UAE] and [most importantly] job vacancies.

So, when I finished high school, it was expected of me to follow the [foot]steps of my siblings. That doesn't mean I didn't have a choice, but because graduates [of public post-secondary educational institutions] are wanted in the work field, I was encouraged to join.

Zainab described important aspects of her high school experience.

I never attended a private school. In high school, I joined the science section because there were two sections, science and art. All the teachers and students in

the school were female. High school was very boring, to tell you the truth. We had no chance to participate in any other activities and were always busy studying. Each class was 45 minutes [in length] and we had 6 or 7 classes each day with only a 10 or 15 minute [lunch] break. The school system used memorizing a lot, so now I feel like I forgot everything I learned there except for English, Islamic studies, and Arabic studies.

English teaching was typical [routine] and very useless which is why most public school students who join college afterwards find lots of difficulties with their English. We used to study grammar and take comprehension lessons from the book but it was hardly of any use. [In a typical English lesson] the teacher would [say] to the class “open your books to lesson two”, for example, then [she would say] “read and underline the difficult words.” Then she would explain them and that was it. In high school, all the teachers were Arabs, so even [in] the English class, teachers and students spoke [mostly] Arabic. In short, if you didn’t study English independently when you were a public school student, then you wouldn’t be able to speak the language well.

Zainab described important aspects of her college experience. The researcher asked only general questions about Zainab’s experience in college and allowed her to respond with her own interpretation of the question. After the initial question, “please describe your college experience?” The researcher continued using prompts that allowed the participant to decide the important aspects of her college experience such as “anything else you would like to add?” or “for example” or “can you tell me a little more

about that" as a means of obtaining full rich descriptions or to obtain judgment criteria when the participant expressed a judgment.

It's very different in college. We have more freedom for independent learning.

We hardly studied anything from the textbook unless it was a practice for an exam. [We have] four or six hours of classes [but] our learning is mainly project based and strongly [employs] teamwork, so during the classes we work on exercises either individually or in groups. The project based system makes it easier to practice English regularly. For example, when we do a research [project], we read lots of English material or when we conduct an interview, we speak in English. So, it's a lot more useful than just looking at the book.

As far as leisure [time] is concerned, we have a coffee shop, a library, and a gym. But to be honest, it's too hectic right now to think about going to the gym. Zainab chose to describe her college teachers enthusiastically and at great length.

All the students are girls but the teachers are from both genders [and they are] mostly native English speakers which is useful for the students because they [teachers and students] keep talking in English for the whole class period. Because our studies are usually project-based, the teacher gives the required information for us to start the project with, explains the concepts of the lesson, and guides us in the project.

Last year [I had] a very good English teacher, Mr. K. He was the best English teacher I've ever experienced. He had a very good presence in the class. Everyone paid attention to him not because they are afraid but because his classes were very interesting. He knew the weaknesses and strengths of each student in

terms of writing and all the other English skills. He was friendly, but strict. [He was] the perfect teacher in my opinion.

My first year at college, I had a very good English teacher, as well. She used to teach students according to their skills and level. She divided the class into groups according to their levels and gave us work accordingly which was useful because there was a variety of skills and levels in the class. Everyone's ability was used to the maximum.

Another good math teacher I had [was] Mr. J. He [usually taught] Information Technology but he [taught] math perfectly. He had a very good style of teaching as well. His presence was very entertaining and he explained math without making you feel that [math was] a horrible subject. So, I didn't feel like I was studying math that year. It was a fun subject for the first time in a long time [since my mother taught me at home]. The thing is that in math, the base is very important. If you understand the base then the rest will be very easy. So he would concentrate on teaching us where the theory came from instead of giving us the formula [right away]. I think that was the main advantage of his teaching style.

At this point, I asked Zainab if she could tell me about a teacher who was not effective in the classroom.

[Zainab occasionally used a text messaging abbreviation “lol” which stands for “laughing out loud” indicating that she was giggling or found the question amusing.] This time I will not mention any names. [“lol”] One of my Information Technology teachers was horrible. [“lol”] In terms of treating

people and teaching us as well. He was an English teacher but the college was training teachers to multi-task. It seemed like he started teaching Information Technology only last year. It [his teaching style] was very old fashioned. He would ask us to put the laptop lid down in an Information Technology class which was pretty useless because you had to follow the teacher's steps. Information Technology lessons are supposed to be practical lessons in which we can find out what our mistakes are. Instead, he always asked us to just listen and watch. It was so boring and horrible.

This year, our marketing teacher is new in the college and he's not very familiar with the [college's] rules and the [college's] system. So we're suffering with him a bit. He doesn't explain his lessons. We finished two chapters last week without even knowing that we actually started them. Actually, with this week, it's four chapters and he didn't explain a thing. [“lol”] There is a plan for the semester and in that plan we were supposed to finish four chapters of the book in two weeks. Now the two weeks have passed already but he didn't explain anything in the four chapters. He just came to class, gave us a very difficult case study and that was it.

The researcher asked Zainab to describe something difficult or challenging in her experience at the college?

The toughest challenge is making choices. We go though many situations where we have to be very careful to choose the right thing. For example, when I was a Foundations [the introductory year before the start of program courses] student, we had the choice of taking a challenge test and if we passed it we could go

directly to year one. I took the test and passed, but then I chose to stay [in Foundations]. I felt that I was learning many things and it wouldn't hurt to spend a year getting used to the atmosphere and the system in the college. I realize that [even more] now because the Foundations year was very eventful. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I think I grew as a person.

[Another example of trying to make good choices occurred] when I first joined the college. I was determined to join the Information Technology major. But after two years of studying and having time to consider other options, I decided I loved Information Technology too much to study it. I didn't want to make it a studying subject. I preferred to learn Information Technology independently because I like to learn how to use different software independently. On the other hand, I can't learn business on my own. So, I wanted to learn something that I didn't know much about especially since [business] is very essential in our country.

Since I am a business student, I would like to start my own business and basically focus on marketing since [marketing] is my favorite field in business. I don't have a complete picture [of the business I want to start] yet because the market changes through long periods of time and [the market] will probably change a lot by the time I'm able to do it, inshallah [phrase meaning God willing]. But if I choose something, I would want it to be unique. [As an example], I would like to use my graphic designing skills to [do] market[ing] for big companies. And when I have enough money, I would like to travel to Italy and live there.

Zainab continued describing her life's dream.

I would love to visit Italy. It's my dream to go and live there. I have so many dreams, but I'm never tired of talking about them. My dreams are all the result of my hobbies. I like writing a lot, especially writing in English, so my biggest ambition is to have any of my writings published. [I like to do] creative writing, poetry basically, but I want to develop myself and start writing stories and novels. In my first year at college, I wrote a play script and we performed it on stage. It was terrific. It was a mixture of poetry and conversations.

The researcher asked Zainab to describe the decision-making process that resulted in her choosing business rather than literature or another field closer to her dream.

[Studying and living abroad] is very difficult for us [Emirati females] and for most of us impossible unless a man of the family is with us. If we want to continue our higher degrees we have to do it in the country but not all majors are available [in public post-secondary educational institutions in the UAE] which makes it difficult to decide [on a major]. [Students could attend private colleges and universities that charged tuition but offer liberal arts types of degrees.]

Zainab described suitable jobs for Emirati women and work related issues in the UAE.

I've never experienced work yet, but this semester, inshallah [God willing], we'll have to go on work placement for four weeks. [I am optimistic about finding a job after I complete my college degree because] the government is very encouraging [in all aspects] starting from [establishing] schools, colleges, and universities [for women and continuing by] trying to provide facilities for women

at work [and providing] conferences that discuss women's issues. Last year, for example, when we had the World Bank meeting here [in Dubai], there was a video conference held in our college about women's development all over the world. We were able to interact with women from different countries through video conference and discuss the difficulties [women face]. It was great.

[Jobs that are considered unsuitable are] jobs within very mixed environments where women have to spend too much time working with men [as colleagues and peers] or in banks or hotels. It's true that everywhere there will be male colleagues, but in some places [the contact] is more [prolonged] than [in] other [places]. [The problem with the bank is that] there are two types of banks in the UAE, banks which deal with interest rates and Islamic banks [which use do not use interest rates]. In Islam, of course, [many people think] it's not allowed to deal with interest rates which is why so many people here don't like working in banks. Many people take loans [from banks that use interest rates] but many deal with Islamic banks as well. It depends on how pious they are, I guess.

UAE nationals prefer [working in] the government sector because of the many advantages there are such as shorter working hours, more [ample] salaries, and longer holidays. But I think now there's more awareness about the importance of working in the private sector as well. Many [UAE nationals] also realize that development and promotion is easier in the private sector than [in] the government [sector]. Now that people are starting to accept the idea of working in the private sector as well, it's becoming more socially acceptable. [The

problem is that] with the very long working hours and [little or] no facilities for women [to work away from men], it's tough to attract more [female] employees.

There are many [other] things I can tell you [about difficulties that women face]. For example, we don't have the freedom to work wherever we want after graduation. We have to take our parents' permission first. Then we can start working.

There are difficulties at work as well. There's tough competition for higher positions within organizations. It's not easy for a local [UAE national] woman to get promoted and become a [UAE national] man's boss.

There are problems with maternity leaves. There are very short maternity leaves in some places. Our college, for example, only gives 2 weeks [as an excused absence] to students who deliver [babies]. Can you believe that? I think it is very little time because delivery is not easy and it's most importantly not easy to go and study when you have a two-week old baby. But some girls are able to do it, I can't imagine that.

During Ramadan [the month of fasting where Muslims, who are able, do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset] we healthy students feel tired and drowsy. It must be very difficult for pregnant women to work [during Ramadan] especially those who work in the private sector [as] their working hours could go on till four o'clock.

[Another problem is] the eternal problem of having to balance work and family especially for married women. The society many years ago used to consider women as housewives whose job was to look after their houses and take

care of their children. Even if there were working women, [they worked] mostly in the teaching field [so their working hours matched their children's time in school]. But as universities were built for local women and the fields they can take part in are expanding and many local women work until 5 or 6 o'clock now. [The long time spent away from home] makes it difficult for women to observe family matters closely. Some husbands therefore start asking their wives to leave their jobs and focus on the house. That's where the problems start. The wives, of course, have come a long way to reach where they are and it's not easy to give up their jobs. Women normally feel angry for what their husbands are asking them to do and plead for understanding. In some cases, there are understanding husbands who look for effective solutions but in many cases the quarrels between them lead to divorce. The divorce rates are becoming higher.

You know, families are becoming smaller, only parents and children live together which makes it easy to distribute the income between them [provide adequately for the needs of all the family members]. But, because everyone [in the family] is busy for more than half the day there's no one from the family to talk to and share problems with and so on. Families were a lot stronger [in the past] than they are now. The families [in the past] didn't only consist of parents and children! Uncles, grandparents and cousins also lived together which made the ties stronger and divorce was a rare case. But now, with development, in spite of the benefits, problems in the families are increasing.

[An effective solution to family problems when the wife is working is] to share responsibilities between the husband and the wife. [It is] not only the

responsibility of the wife for taking care of the children but the responsibility of the husband too. But here [in the UAE] [a husband willing to help with children] is rare to find. [Not to mention] a man helping with housework, it would be a miracle!

[Before continuing, Zainab sent the “thoughtful smiley” icon]. This doesn’t apply to all men but here [in the UAE] I think that many [men] are lazy and are more [concerned] about having fancy cars and mobile phones and hanging out in the malls. They don’t feel much sense of responsibility because they haven’t experienced a difficult life. Most of [the young men my age] are pampered by their parents and they don’t feel the need to make any effort.

There are responsible [Emirati] men here but they are rare to find. I mean if a[n Emirati] man wants to marry a foreigner then it’s all right but if a local lady wanted [to do] that, it would be a scandal. [Zainab indicated “lol” for two possible reasons: her mother is from India so her father married a foreigner, or maybe because she was just being sarcastic.] But I don’t agree with that because in our religion the most important thing is for the man to be a Muslim. It doesn’t say anywhere in the Quran that he has to be Arab or Emirati. If all men followed the laws of God, the world would’ve been a better place. But instead, they [men] create their own rules and follow them. It’s the biggest and toughest challenge [Emirati women face].

[The desire for Emirati women to work] is more than just about money. Women not only look for financial facilities when they go to work, but for self-satisfaction and to be helpful for their society and country. A woman never

knows when she will need to find a job or need to provide her children with a living source. Also a large part of the world population consists of women. If that labor resource is not used to the maximum, the country will not develop to its maximum ability [potential] either. [Women] are helping to develop the country as employees. Employees work in many sectors [fields] that are important for the country's growth. They contribute their efforts, time, and ideas for the organizations they work for and because the organizations are part of the country, helping the organizations [and companies] means helping the country.

I think women here are more hungry to prove themselves and graduate with a high degree, whereas men have more freedom and do whatever they want [to do] with their lives. [Men can choose to] start work immediately after high school or go to study abroad. We [Emirati women] don't have much freedom which is why we head to higher studies because that's where we are appreciated the most.

The country, especially Dubai, is developing a lot in terms of business and communication technology and to fulfill the needs of the economy, everyone's contribution is needed including men and women. So as for women, we're moving from a very slow paced work life to a modern one which requires [our] presence for many hours a day. [The] traditional [role for women] was to stay at home and take care of the children, but now [the role of women] is different. [The role of women] is changing rapidly.

Discussion of Zainab's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by Zainab?

Household dynamics. Zainab's mother was from India and had been educated in the Indian school system up to middle school level. Therefore, Zainab's mother had a functional level in English and was able to assist Zainab in English and math in her early schooling. Even though Zainab's mother did not complete secondary school nor did she contribute to the household income, Zainab and all of her brothers and sisters attended post-secondary education programs. In addition, all siblings who had completed post-secondary education programs were working including one of Zainab's sisters.

Working children. As evidenced by the preceding paragraph, none of Zainab's siblings gave up schooling to provide supplementary income to the family.

Traditional practices. Zainab mentioned several interrelated traditional practices that served as obstacles to females participation in post-secondary education and realizing its benefits: a) Emirati marriage customs; b) limited freedom of movement for Emirati women, c) requiring a male guardian's permission for a woman to work or attend post-secondary education. Combined, these three factors significantly inhibited an Emirati woman's ability to manage her future.

Zainab's description of Emirati marriage customs combined with Zainab's perception of most Emirati young men around her age as being immature and irresponsible illustrated causes of the precarious situation Emirati women experienced when participating in post-secondary education or working outside the home. Zainab implied that most of the responsibility for household responsibilities and marital

compromise rested on Emirati women. Emirati men with a failed marriage could initiate another marriage proposal, whereas an Emirati woman with a failed marriage would have to sit and wait for another marriage proposal. Divorced men, even with children, would be able to secure a second marriage while divorced women, especially with children, might be considered less desirable than previously unmarried women. In addition, according to Emirati law, if an Emirati woman remarried, the women may have to forfeit custody of the children to the mother's parents, the ex-husband's parents, or the ex-husband. This researcher tried to establish by independent research the proportion of divorces initiated by husbands as opposed to wives. However, the data regarding family matters in the Emirati courts were held strictly confidential. Clearly, Emirati women and men were struggling with the changing roles of men and women in Emirati society.

The cultural practice of requiring male chaperones for women traveling abroad to work or study limited women's abilities to obtain more lucrative and prestigious jobs because most majors offered at government-sponsored colleges and universities consisted of entry-level vocational programs. Zainab implied that male immediate-family members were not often willing to be chaperones.

Additionally, employers required women to have the guardian's permission to accept a job. Theoretically, a woman could apply for a job, go through the interview, and get a job offer but be unable to accept the offer due to a member of the family objecting to the type of position or simply the idea of women working in general.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Issues not discussed by Zainab.

Decent and free schools. Zainab stated that the government provided many schools, colleges, and universities for women. Zainab characterized the public primary

and secondary schooling experience as “useless.” Zainab enjoyed her post-secondary educational experience and characterized it as useful, practical, and modern even though some individual teachers were not as effective as others. Zainab considered the segregated nature of the schools and universities essential to facilitate women’s participation. The women’s post-secondary institutions contained facilities for extracurricular activities including a videoconference room, café, library, and gymnasium.

Trained staff and role models. Public primary and secondary schools had all female teachers for female teachers. At the post-secondary level, both male and female, mostly native English-speaking professionals from all over the world were employed as instructors. Zainab perceived the teachers to be mostly high quality and considered the educational program to be useful and practical. Zainab gave no indication in her interview that she was harassed or maltreated in any way by her teachers at any level of schooling.

Educational Representation. Although some types of professional education were not easily accessible to Emirati women, Emirati law did not prohibit women from entering any field or occupying any position. According to Zainab, in Emirati society, however, occupations in which men and women came into prolonged contact were culturally unsuitable for Emirati women. Occupations which involved performing duties contrary to Islamic teachings such as working in banks using interest rates as opposed to profit-sharing, or working in hotels as most hotels in the UAE served alcohol were considered unsuitable for all Emiratis. However, the government encouraged Emiratis, both men and women, to work in the banking and hospitality sectors.

Q2. What returns on her educational investment did the Zainab expect to gain?

According to Zainab, many Emirati women realized that a post-secondary education was necessary to gain personal freedom and manage the future, “We [Emirati women] don’t have much freedom which is why we head to higher studies because that’s where we are appreciated.” Zainab implied that by gaining a post-secondary education Emirati women could hope to have more personal freedom, economic freedom, and freedom in making important life choices as well as help to develop the country.

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Zainab identified several challenges including a) inadequate public primary and secondary instruction, especially in English; b) lack of career counseling; c) lack of available majors in the UAE for women.

The rote method of instruction and assessment failed to provide preparation needed for students to succeed at the post-secondary education level, as alluded to by Zainab, “I feel like I forgot everything I learned there except English, Islamic studies, and Arabic studies.” Zainab further discussed English instruction specifically, “In short, if you didn’t study English independently when you were a public school student, then you wouldn’t be able to speak the language well. . . [so] must public school students who join college afterwards find lots of difficulties with their English.” All of the public colleges and universities and many private colleges and universities used English as the means of instruction, so inadequate preparation in English severely challenged students.

Zainab experienced a lack of career counseling in high school and college as evidenced by her statements, “In high school, I joined the science section because there were two sections, art and science” and “When I first joined the college, I was determined to join the Information Technology major. But after two years of studying and having time to consider other options, I decided I loved Information Technology too much to study it.” Zainab eventually chose the business major because, “I wanted to learn something that I didn’t know much about especially since [business] is very essential in our country.” Zainab was not informed of the career paths that each option would lead to in high school or in college. Moreover, Zainab did not chose a major based on skills and aptitudes, but rather on vague perceptions about the needs of the workplace. Similarly, Zainab’s choice of post-secondary institutions was based on the family’s general perceptions about the institutions, themselves, rather than an awareness of the differences in programs or possible career opportunities offered at each one. Zainab stated, “It was expected of me to follow the [footsteps] of my siblings . . . because graduates [from public post-secondary institutions] are wanted in the work field, I was encouraged to join.” All of Zainab’s siblings attended public post-secondary institutions. Private institutions were not considered.

A woman could travel abroad to study for professional qualifications, at government expense in many cases, providing a male guardian would accompany the woman during the course of study. Therefore, women’s options for choosing majors were limited, in most cases, to the entry-level vocational positions offered in the UAE at the government sponsored colleges and universities. Zainab, for example, stated, “my biggest ambition is to have any of my writings published” and has, in fact, had one of the

plays performed in the college as a project. However, Zainab was not able to attend a liberal arts college or university to develop the talent for writing because the option was not available at the government colleges and traveling abroad was not possible in Zainab's case. Zainab, therefore, chose a government college with the IT major, switching later to the Business major, for the above mentioned reasons which had little to do with skills, aptitude, and personal desires.

In Zainab's experience, the government colleges, as well as many companies, did not provide excused absence or maternity leave for female students and employees. In addition, the special needs of women, especially pregnant women, were not taken into consideration during Ramadan the official month of fasting.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Zainab described the "eternal problem of having to balance work and family especially for married women." Zainab mentioned that most Emiratis, men and women, preferred to work in the public sector because the salaries were higher, the working days shorter, and holidays more numerous than the private sector. The differences were quite striking considering that some employees in the private sector work up to 10 or 12 hours per day for up to seven days per week. So, the competition for the preferred public sector jobs became stiff. Zainab stated that in the public sector, women found difficulty being promoted over Emirati men even if women were more qualified. So, many women turned to the private sector even though the working conditions were less desirable. In Zainab's family, her father, two brothers, and sister were working in the public sector.

As previously mentioned, with more Emirati women working more hours, working more holidays, and getting less pay than many Emirati men, women were finding their stress levels increasing and their personal lives suffering. Zainab was concerned about the emerging trend in which women were increasingly assisting with the household financial responsibilities by working outside the home while men were not reciprocating by assuming some of the household management responsibilities.

Zainab commented that she thought the traditional marriage customs were unfair to women, especially in her generation because men “create their own rules and follow them” and Zainab through that “if all men followed the laws of God, the world would’ve been a better place.” According to Zainab, the behavior of Emirati men was the “biggest and toughest challenge [Emirati women face].” Zainab perceived that according to the UAE laws, Emirati women were protected and given equal rights to men but according to customs and practical behaviors, women were inhibited by men in the workplace and in their personal lives. Zainab’s solution was not to make new laws but for Emirati women but for all Emiratis to follow God’s laws which were already in existence.

Zainab was a self-directed learner as evidenced by her learning languages “on her own” and preferring to acquire IT skills “on her own.” Zainab possessed a life’s dream of publishing writings and living in Italy but realized that the resources need to achieve that goal were not readily available. Zainab focused on a more realistic goal of using her IT skills to do marketing in a company and eventually starting a business.

Case 2: Hessa

Hessa was the seventh participant to volunteer for the research project. Hessa did not want her voice or image recorded, so text messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Hessa was a third year Business student studying in a public post-secondary institution. She was 20 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was approximately 6 hours.

Hessa was eager to participate in the research and referred to the researcher by her first name which was in contrast to the other participants who referred to the researcher always as “Miss” or “Doctorah” the female of Doctor seen as a sign of respect.

Hessa described herself, her family and the decision-making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education.

I listen to music [with lyrics in English] almost all the time, plus [I watch English-language] movies, and [I speak English with] my friends. I love to learn languages. English and French are my favorites. I am still working on French, though. But, I'll reach that dream soon, I hope.

I have two sisters and one brother. My eldest sister is studying medicine in Pakistan and is about to graduate. Then comes my brother who graduated this year from a government college. Now he's working for Dubal [Dubai Aluminum Company]. My little sister just graduated [from] high school and joined our [government] college to study pharmacy. My father graduated from high school and then started working but Mom graduated from the university. My mother is a wonderful mom. She is a principal in a kindergarten. She is from Bahrain and I went to Bahrain 4 or 6 years back [to visit family there]. We used to go [to

Bahrain] every year, but then my sister went abroad [to study], so we didn't travel since then.

Going to college [as opposed to university] was not in my mind at all nor was it in my family's [expectations for me]. I wanted to study dentistry, but my high school percentage did not help. [Hessa's high school GPA was not high enough for her to qualify to attend dental college on a scholarship.] So, I looked [into other educational possibilities] and asked my family for advice. They helped me get information about colleges and universities, but they did not [try to] convince me to go to a particular one, to be frank. So, I had to decide [on my own] and I chose a government college although I heard many bad reflections and experiences [from former students]. But you never know [about an experience] until you "touch" [emphasis added by participant] the experience, so I went there and simply love it.

My family was concerned about me not getting along because this government college is [known for] giving a lot of work and stuff. But I made my way through [the first two years] and I am still making my way through. All thanks to God.

Hessa described important aspects of her college experience.

In Foundations, we heard about "the fast track". My friends and I didn't know anything about it. It was for Foundations students with high levels [in] English and math. So, we asked our teachers for advice and they advised us to join. So, we added our names. There were only two sections in "the fast track program" so only 40 students would be chosen, but we made it. We had to do projects and

other stuff that were higher in level than the regular Foundations students [were required to do] so it was hard, to be honest. But we succeeded and [we] were the first “Fast Track” generation. Our college director was proud of us.

[Another thing I did in college was] act in my friend’s play. It was really hard. It was a project we had to do where we could choose anything we wanted to do [to demonstrate our English speaking ability]. So, my friend and I chose [to act out a play in which we would be] the first Foundations students to go to work placement. It wasn’t easy, but we did it.

Hessa described her work experience and important work-related issues.

I worked as a summer trainee in Dubai Customs for 2 years [in a row]. This was in 2002 and 2003. Then I worked again for 2 months in Dubai Refreshments, a company that produces Pepsi and some other soft drinks. For 2004, I worked for an exhausting, yet amazing and unique two months in Dubai Internet City. The last [work experience] was the toughest because I was actually [considered] one of the staff and not a summer trainee because they had way too many projects and not enough staff.

I am looking forward to having a work experience outside Dubai and I am aiming to accomplish that through the work placement we have to do this year. I have Bahrain and Pakistan in mind since my mom’s family is in Bahrain and my big sister is studying in Pakistan.

[I believe that UAE national] women don’t have to fear not getting good jobs when they graduate because our government has given them the same rights as men. So [man and women] are equal. [However,] UAE national [men and

women] always look for what is comfortable and easy for them. What I mean is that [UAE national men and women prefer to] join the public sector because they think the] salaries are pretty high. [UAE nationals think they] can go in and out without anyone actually being strict about attendance. Moreover, working hours are shorter [in the public sector] than in the private sector. However, some [UAE national women] join the public sector because it helps them to [fulfill their] household duties like educating their children after work, taking care of household matters and things like that. So there is a positive and a negative to this story.

Shaikha Fatima (the wife of Shaikh Zayed, late President of the UAE) did a lot for women in the past and [she] continues [to try to improve the Emirati women's situation]. She used to encourage them to be something. She met with them and made them feel that they could do something for the UAE in the future. That is why [Emirati women] are giving so much now for the UAE, because of her and what she did in the past.

[When women work] they feel that they are involved in building our country in one way or another. Moreover, women want to prove that they can make a change. For example, [women contribute by] making the economy rise or [women contribute by] being leaders in their own companies or in other companies. There are statistics [I have read that indicate] that women are better leaders than men. Women are working hard to prove that they can change, that they can be leaders and are able to compete with men and [make] the country even better.

I heard and saw so many [women] complaining about men [in the workplace]. [Men] abuse women for being women and taking higher paying positions at work. Therefore, [working outside the home] has been really stressful for women [and makes continuing to work outside the home] difficult for some women. Men think that they can rule the country [just] because they are men, strong and capable, not following their hearts, as they say. [According to men,] women follow their emotions most of the time and [women] can't handle important matters effectively [and that women] are weak when it comes to making important decisions. All of which is untrue.

Now, we can see that there are [Emirati women] lawyers, doctors, managers, pilots, teachers, and the list goes on. Those [positions] were not so in the past, but the government made the effort and gave [women] the encouragement to reach those positions.

[For example, consider] Dr. Moza Ghubash. She used to be a simple person with a simple job. Then she graduated from the university, [but] she didn't stop there. She studied [until she received her] Ph. D. Now, she is teaching some subjects at university and she opened something called "open university". This is a university where students could complete [their higher studies] who couldn't finish their education for some reason and couldn't join or go back to college or university. So, she gave them hope and new opportunities. [She] opened doors for women for a better future.

I've also met with Meshgan Al Awar. She is a very successful leader in Dubai Police. As I remember, she made her way to that position although she had many obstacles. So, I guess [she is an example of a women who] made a change.

I read that [there are more Emirati women studying in colleges and universities than Emirati men]. Actually, it's something that our country must open its eyes to. It's a very serious matter when men are not so interested in education, unlike women. I'm not defending women because I am a woman but that's the truth. Most Emirati men [prefer to go to] work after graduating high school or stay at home which is even worse.

In the past, women [from Dubai and other Emirates] used to go and study in colleges and universities in Sharjah or Deira but there was a major transportation problem. Women had to go [long distances and travel in some cases] by boats [to get to the educational institutions], as I remember reading. So, the government [realized] that women were not participating in education because [they did not have adequate transportation]. Women did not feel comfortable going back and forth to such far places to get an education. So, the government built colleges and universities in Dubai [and many other Emirates] as well. Moreover, the government provided high quality transportation for [women in the form of] busses taking them right from their houses to their colleges or universities. Now Emirati women are more concerned about education because, in my opinion, they want to prove that they can do better and they are always seeking for a better future no matter what the difficulties. [Emirati] women have

this desire to be leaders or even [just] someone that the country is proud of. That is my opinion anyway.

Discussion of Hessa's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. In Hessa's family, the women held higher educational qualifications (or were working toward them) than the men. Hessa's mother completed a university degree, and worked as a kindergarten principal. Hessa's sisters were studying pharmacy and medicine, with one sister studying abroad in Pakistan. Hessa's father, on the other hand, was a high school graduate who began working immediately after high school and her brother, a government college graduate, was working at Dubai. At least two of members of Hessa's family members worked in the public sector.

Hessa described her mother as "a wonderful mom" and that Emirati women were responsible for "educating their children." Hessa traveled many times to Bahrain as Hessa's mother was Bahraini. Hessa hoped to gain work experience abroad either in Pakistan or in Bahrain.

Working children. Neither Hessa, nor any siblings participated in gainful employment at the expense of schooling although Hessa participated in several summer jobs to gain experience.

Traditional practices.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Not an issue with Hessa.

Decent and free school. To encourage women to participate in post-secondary education, the UAE government established post-secondary learning institutions for women in all major areas and provided “high-quality” transportation for women to make it accessible.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools. Hessa appeared to view her teachers as positive role models but cited roles models in the community such as Shaikha Fatima and other Emirati women as specifically impressing her.

Educational representation. Hessa stated that the government gave men and women equal rights in the workplace. The government encouraged women to participate in post-secondary education and enter the workplace at all levels, so many women were seen in positions that were previously filled only by men including lawyers, doctors, managers, pilots, and so on.

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

According to Hesssa, Emirati women wanted to work to help develop the country as a way to repay prominent people, including Shaikha Fatima, the wife of the late UAE President, Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nehyan, for encouraging women to “be something” and make a mark in Emirati society. As a result, women “wanted to prove that they can make a change.” Hessa commented, “Emirati women … want to prove that they can do better and they are always seeking for a better future no matter what the difficulties....Emirati women have this desire to be leaders or just someone that the country is proud of.”

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Hessa suffered from lack of formal career counseling. Hessa stated that she wanted to be a dentist but her high school GPA was not high enough to attend dentistry training. So, Hessa's only recourse was to ask her family to help find a suitable post-secondary institution. Hessa chose a government college even though "many bad reflections" had heard. Zainab thrived, as evidenced by being chosen for the "fast track" program.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Hessa heard many working women complaining about men treating women unfairly in the workplace, especially if a more qualified woman were promoted over a less qualified man causing a great deal of stress for some women. Hessa was concerned about the trend of young Emirati men preferring to work directly after high school rather than attend post-secondary education or just sitting at home without working or attending college. The problem of Emirati men being less qualified than Emirati women in the workplace meant that women seeking promotions would be more inclined to face unfair treatment. Hessa implied that Emirati men in the public sector sometimes claimed that the "emotional" nature of women made women less capable decision-makers. In Hessa's opinion, the claim was completely false and used by men to justify keeping women from advancing in the workplace.

Hessa had participated in numerous summer work experience positions to get experience prior to exiting the college. She hoped to gain additional experience abroad in either Bahrain or Pakistan to make herself more marketable.

Case 3: Marwa

Marwa was the fifth participant to volunteer for the research project. Marwa did not want her voice or image recorded, so internet instant messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Marwa was a first year student studying in federal University in Dubai. She was 17 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was approximately of 5 hours and 15 minutes.

Marwa was eager to participate in the study as indicated in her initial responses. She states that by participating in the study, “I am only doing my job. I am more than glad to help you. Please feel free to use anything [that I say] that helps you. I will do my best.”

Marwa described herself, her family, and the decision-making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education.

I am the Moderator [of an internet website discussion board], thank God.

Whenever I entered a forum I talked a lot and people seemed to like me, so I was nominated for moderation. And I got it. I’m new in this position, so I don’t know much about it but the Administrator explained some of my main duties to me.

The section I am responsible for is like my house. I am the Queen of my house. I control the threads and discussions. I delete whatever replies seem offensive, or against the rules, or out of place. I try my best to make attractive threads and cool discussions. Mainly I try to make my section in the forum the best and attract members to participate. That’s it.

Let me not say that I am the Queen of the place, but the guardian of my section. It is [a place] where members can chat about any topic the like, as long

as it's within the limits. Because of our culture and religion, there are some topics that can be discussed in other forums but not in our forums. Some of the other forums have topics that are not appropriate for us culturally and as Muslims. We can tell sometimes from the titles so we [know] we should not go there and we do not want our forums to have the same inappropriate topics. As an Arab who has lived her whole life in a clean environment, I can not [stand] to read about those topics. I am disgusted and embarrassed just thinking [of their existence]. I am not sexist or [prudish or] something, but I just don't accept that sort of thing. [It was not appropriate to discuss or ask for examples of what Marwa considered disgusting and embarrassing, however, she alluded to some of them in later responses.]

I do [support the controls on the media and the limited censorship in the UAE]. I really do especially where it concerns places where children can access [inappropriate material]. I think that nothing has destroyed the mentalities and acceptance to the UAE values the culture that is based on the Islamic religion more than the uncensored TV shows, movies and even cartoons.

Personally, [I have spare time to spend as a moderator] because my father is a bit strict these days. I don't know why. [So], I don't go to shopping malls [like many other UAE nationals do]. Instead, I use PhotoShop and learn some new graphic methods. I will show you an example of it. I'm so happy about it. I like to sit and chat to my friends, or enter forums and post my work, or discuss some issues, such things.

I have always considered my father as a role model. He was always the one who encouraged me and motivated me to become the best. And I think that he is very knowledgeable. He knows anything and everything. I have always dreamed of becoming like him someday. Being knowledgeable has made him a very respected man and I want to be just like him and better.

We are three sisters and three brothers. I'm the eldest. My brother, next in line from me, is 11 years younger than me, so I was an only child for 11 years. My mother worked for three years but she stopped [after I was born]. She always said that I was more important than her work. I'm glad I was an only child. I was raised very well, alhumdulillah (thank God).

Actually, everyone in my family went to the university and even worked afterwards. So I was expected to do the same thing. It's not that I didn't have a choice to sit at home rather than go to the university, but you can say that [going to university] has always been in the family. So it wasn't like I went to my dad and told him that I wanted to complete my studies. [In fact], most of my family has studied medicine and hard stuff like that. So [my family] didn't like it when I told them I was going to study design. [They said] "it's toooooooo easy". [lol] That's how my family is.

[In fact], all my friends in high school wanted to go [to college or university]. [When asked if any of her friends' parents refused to allow them to continue their education after high school, she replied] I don't know. I never thought of that [parents refusing to allow their daughters to study.] I have never met such people.

[When my mother went to university] her family didn't mind, but her father was not an educated man. He was a simple man with a simple mentality. The only thing he dreamed of was to see his daughters happy. At that time, the only university that was available was one government University in Al Ain but [most people thought] it was not that good. So my mother thought that studying outside [the UAE] would give her a chance of getting better knowledge.

Actually, she studied in Kuwait for one year then came back to the UAE to study I Al Ain. She hated the university. She lived in the dorms [at the university] and she said it was the worst thing [she ever] did. She was always distracted and the environment at the university was not nice. But, she managed to finish. I realize that my mother's time was totally different. Women were so shy. They were too shy to ask a male teacher questions or discuss matters. That was the thing I noticed [that made my mother's university experience unpleasant]. On the other hand, I feel comfortable talking and discussing things with male and female teachers and [from my own observation] so do most students my age. I got used to having male teachers and so did the other girls at the university, so having a male teacher doesn't affect the amount and quality of work I present but some girls do pay more attention in male teachers' classes. This is because [the girls] are too shy to be embarrassed by or shouted at by a male teacher, I guess so. Marwa discussed the primary and secondary school experiences she had as well as other members of her family.

I have my cousins who studied in Canada [because their father was working in Canada at the time]. When I compared [what they told me about the learning

styles in Canadian schools] to our way of learning [in the UAE], I noticed a very big difference. My cousins said that in elementary school, [teachers] never gave them homework. Everything they had to do in order to complete their assignments was done in class [with the teacher present]. I remember her telling me that she did not learn her English alphabets by memorization. They used to sing [the alphabet song] and she did not even know that she was saying the alphabets.

In the UAE it is different. Your education is fed to you. [Teachers] make you memorize everything from the moment you enter school till you graduate. [For example], my brothers go to [the same] private school [I went to], but their teachers previously taught at a government school [and have not modified their style to be similar to the accepted teaching style in the private school]. [My brothers] come home and they have this reading book. When they read, they read perfectly but if I skipped a page, they don't know how to read. It is because they are memorizing the words instead of learning to pronounce every letter. That's the biggest mistake ever.

My aunt is an English teacher in a government school She says that when students are asked to write an essay, they are given the choice to memorize the essay that is already in the book. The whole essay! Or create one. Of course, they memorize the essay because they were not taught how to create one. Imagine, these children are growing up not knowing how to read the proper way and [they] graduate from school and enter the university still thinking that they

have to memorize everything. Then they fail their courses because [in the university] they must understand not memorize.

I went to [the same] private school [as my brothers]. [When I went to school there, the teachers taught] English from KG 1 [kindergarten for 4-5 year olds] by pronouncing the letters. The teachers [at the time I went to school] were willing to give knowledge and make the students [do] their best. They devoted their time to students not only teaching the subjects but also morals and tried to help students with their personal problems. I really liked the teachers. [I consider myself lucky because] from what I saw, most girls [at the university] were not that good in English. I always thought that my English was average, not great and not bad, but when I entered the university, I was considered to be one of the students with excellent English.

Marwa described her university experience.

University is harder than high school. [There is] more pressure, more stress and more responsibility. You are expected to know general information and keep in touch with what is happening in the world. You can't skip a class or you'll get a warning.

There is a new program at the University this year. Students must take three semesters of “general education” and then choose the programs that they want such as fine arts. I just finished two semesters of general education and I have got one left. After I finish [my general studies], I am planning to enter the fine arts college and major in interior design.

In the general semesters we are forced to take five subjects in first semester. [The subjects are] English Arabic, global sociology, ways of knowing, and Information Technology. I used the word “forced” because when I entered the university, I thought that students had the right to choose whatever subjects they wanted to study. But after I took the general subjects, I realized that I needed them. I enjoyed them actually. In the second semester, we had to take seven subjects. [They were] Islamic studies, English, humanities, advising, math, and two electives. For the two electives, I chose arts, from the Arts College and communication, from the College of Communication and Media.

[In my own case, my] first class is interesting. Well, actually it depends on the teacher. Most teachers mark students according to their class participation. Students are expected to read the daily newspapers and answer questions on current events. It's kind of interesting to know that every teacher you are going to study with carries with him or her a new learning adventure. [“lol”] How optimistic! That is how I think when I realize that I have loooooads of classes to attend. I just love the teachers [I have had]. [I] never expected to say that but I really do. Personally, I get all the motivation from the professors there [at University].

[Even though I am prepared for all my classes] before any exam I get very pessimistic. I am always pessimistic when it comes to grades but I am trying to overcome that. I feel very happy when I get a score that is higher than I expected.

I think it is really hard to be married and be a student at the same time. [Most of my friends] want to get married, and soooon [emphasis added by

participant]. I don't think they realize how hard it is to be married and a student at the same time. They think that marriage is a caring and loving husband, a cozy home, a BMW, and perfect kids. [I think that marriage is] a caring and loving husband, a cozy home, a BMW, perfect kids, and most importantly, lots *and lots* of responsibilities [emphasis added by participant].

The wife in the UAE is expected to do most of the house chores such as clean, take care of the kids, teach [the children], cook, wash, iron, take care of the husband, always smile, and be responsible for the money that her husband gives her [for the household expenses]. [She must] know how and where to spend the money and such things. [“lol”] I'm sure there are things that I haven't mentioned but things like that.

[The marriage process] is kind of different from one family to another, but mainly, the husband comes to the father of the girl and proposes. Most families take their daughter's opinion [of] whether she accepts the guy or not. Other families ask people about the guy, first. [Families ask questions such as] Is he a good man? Can he support their daughter? [If the responses were affirmative], then they ask the girl for her opinion. Others don't even bother [to investigate] and don't ask the girl, and it's not likely [that the family will accept the proposal].

[UAE national men know which girls are available] either from their mothers and sisters or a female member of their families, which is most likely. Or he might have studied with the girl or worked with her. [It is] not likely [for a girl to choose her husband]. People in the UAE are not that open-minded. She could think of marrying [a certain guy] but it's not that easy to make the guy propose [to

her father]. Guys in the UAE are different. If they see such a girl, they won't see it in a positive way. They would most probably say that she is a [head]strong girl that has no pride or some nonsense like that.

Unfortunately, it is true [that if a girl hopes that a certain man will come for her, but another man comes first, she has a big decision to make. If she refuses the first suitor, hoping that the one she really wants will come], she may miss her chance completely [with anyone].

Marwa described work related issues.

I have never worked. Although I really wanted to [work], I have not been able to [work]. I think that women can do everything, but there are some jobs that are more for males. If my friends read this, they will think I am an old fashioned girl but it's ok, that's what I believe. There are some jobs that force women to work very closely with men and that's not acceptable in Islam. There are other jobs such as construction and engineering. They are hard jobs. They are jobs that are dirty or jobs that require lifting or climbing.

[Jobs that women are particularly suited for are] jobs like design, graphics, interior design, or anything to do with taste. Personally, I have always dreamt of having my own interior design company. I dream big. [Perhaps], too big, I know. I'll be the manager and I'll [monitor] the work of the employees and help them. Definitely, I'll do some of the work myself. I want this company to be the best [company] my employees can work for. I want it to be like their second home. I want them to devote their time and energy to create the best. That is how I want I to be. [At present], I don't have any business experience [and] I hate accounting.

When I hear my friends talking about [accounting], I get confused. I am more into working with my hands.

Help from Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid, and other high ranking members of the Royal family in Dubai, has given women more chances to get jobs, which motivates [women] even more [to learn and achieve]. But, it's not only the rulers of Dubai, it's the whole UAE government. [The federal women's post-secondary institutions] are all free colleges and universities that are made for girls.

The government of Dubai and the UAE have always supported women's education, as well as men's [education], but, I think, that [the desire to achieve] is all within the UAE women. [Emirati women] are not waiting for people to motivate them. They motivate themselves.

[For example], many private companies are willing to take local educated women in their companies, [even] big companies. And not only that, when you compare an educated woman to an educated man in the UAE, under normal situations, the woman turns out to be more educated.

[For example], an educated Emirati woman is not only a woman who went to school and university to get a degree. No, she did that because she wanted to learn and her learning process does not finish when she graduates from the university. She continues, she reads, looks, searches, and she is not only educated in her field, she knows many things about other fields. That is how I describe an educated [Emirati] woman.

An educated Emirati man, [on the other hand], in my own generation, goes to high school and the university because he has to [get a degree to have a well-paying job]. He only learns because someday he is going to have a family and he will have to support his family. He learns because he doesn't want people to say that he is not educated. He learns so he can be called [by titles including] "doctor" or "architect". Most of the men I know [in my own generation] learn for these reasons, but of course, there are also many men who aren't this way.

I am not sure, but I think this is because long ago, men were the ones who were looked upon to be the best and women were [considered to be] the weak ones. But I think that women in the UAE are willing to change. The government thought to make men and women equal, but the women turned out to be better. That's what I think. Women are able to handle the learning process better than men which means that WE ARE STONGER [emphasis added by participant].

[For example], I have a [fellow] student in my class who is 29 years old and has two kids and she is still motivated to learn. That was something great to see such a person from our society.

Marwa described important changes in Emirati society.

Globalization has made the new generation, that is us, more aware of things and more realistic. That is a good thing. And it has also made us people who can accept changes in our lives. But the problem is that we are accepting of everything from the West, everything, even if it is against our culture and values. We have the ability to accept [what we consider to be appropriate] and at the

same time change [or reject] whatever is against our culture or make it WITH [emphasis added by participant] our culture.

Let me give you an example. When I compare myself to my mother in the way we dress, my mother will never wear pants and a tight shirt. But I do. She sees [wearing pants and a tight shirt as] against our culture. I don't. Of course, I wear the abaya [long sleeved, floor length cloak-like dress, usually black] over it when I go outside but [my mother] will not accept [wearing pants and a tight shirt] either way. [My mother would consider] a jalabeya [floor length, long-sleeved, loose dress], or a [loosely fitting] skirt [appropriate]. But, I can't wear a jalabeya outside [not even under the abaya]. I never wore a jalabeya in my life.

[As another example, when] my mom and dad and the elders in my family sit and watch the news, they think about [the news] in only one way. They would see the issue from only one perspective. But what bothers me is that our generation accepts change [without considering the effects of the change]. Because of all this acceptance of change that is happening in our generation, our parents have become stricter than their [own] parents.

Discussion of Marwa's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. Both of Marwa's parents completed university degrees. Marwa's father was working and Marwa's mother worked for three years until Marwa was born. Although, Marwa's siblings were primary school age and younger, many other

close family members, including women, had attended post-secondary education.

Members of Marwa's family had studied medicine and other professions.

Marwa mentioned that she never thought of parents refusing to allow their daughters to attend post-secondary education and that she "never met such people." Students who attend expensive private schools in the UAE where the government provides free public education, mostly come from more affluent families who can afford to pay tuition, who value education, and are, therefore, prepared to allow or encourage their children to attend post-secondary education.

Although Marwa considered her father as a role model, Marwa believed that she was raised very well by her mother during the eleven years as an only child.

Working children. None of Marwa's siblings had gained employment at the expense of attending schooling.

Traditional practices. Marwa perceived married women as having more difficulty in post-secondary education because Emirati women were responsible for most of the household responsibilities. In addition, Emirati women have limited input in choosing spouses so finding a husband willing to help with household duties was difficult if not impossible.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Not issues with Marwa.

Decent and free school. Marwa attended a private school where English was taught from kindergarten. Marwa perceived private school education as much better than the education in the UAE public school. But Marwa perceived education in Canada ,where her cousins attended primary school, better than UAE private education.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools. At the primary and secondary level, Marwa perceived the teachers and teaching methods in public schools as ineffective especially in teaching English. The standards for boys and girls in public schools and private schools were the similar for each gender. In private primary and secondary schools that Marwa attended, Marwa perceived the teachers to be effective and motivated students to be the best.

Educational representation. Marwa stated that, in her opinion, occupations unsuitable for women included jobs in which men and women worked closely together, physically demanding jobs, and dirty jobs. Marwa also stated that her opinion was not shared by many of her friends. In addition, Marwa stated that jobs particularly suited to women were jobs that involved taste including interior design.

Government practices. The government supported women's education by establishing segregated post-secondary institutions which were at least as good quality as the ones established for males.

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

Marwa stated that the desire for Emirati women to participate in post-secondary education came from within the women. Marwa used the examples of the educated woman and educated man to illustrate the concepts. Women educated themselves to gain an internal reward such as self-satisfaction, broadened skills base, and so on; while Emirati men educated themselves to gain an external reward such as high income, prestige in terms of a title, or the respect of his peers. Women became lifelong learners while Emirati men preferred to learn enough to gain the external rewards society

perceived as important. Marwa remarked, “The government thought to make men and women equal, but the women turned out to be better.”

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Marwa’s experience illustrated an example of a well-prepared student. Marwa’s family expected Marwa to participate in post-secondary education and provided Marwa with private school preparation to help her gain the skills needed to succeed. Marwa observed that many students from public schools had difficulty studying in English. Marwa, on the other hand, was considered excellent in English. In addition, Marwa had a good idea of the career she wanted to pursue after graduation from University, interior design with the intent to open her own interior design company in the future, and was aware of strengths and weaknesses in achieving career goals.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Marwa mentioned the changes that were occurring in the Emirati culture which caused parents to be more strict with children. Emiratis in Marwas parents’ generation feared for children’s well-being. Marwa illustrated the changes using her life compared with her mother’s life. Even though Marwa’s grandfather was not an educated man, himself, he believed that a post-secondary education was beneficial for Marwa’s mother even if obtaining a post-secondary education meant Marwa’s mother traveling abroad to study or living in a dorm. Whereas, Marwa’s father, an educated man who knew

“everything about everything” according to Marwa, was becoming so strict that Marwa did not have much freedom of movement.

Marwa alluded to some disturbing societal changes including the Emirati youth accepting non-Arab and Muslim values which were, according to Marwa, contrary to the Islamic religion. Marwa favored censorship of offensive material in all media and believed that uncensored material had played a part in corrupting the Emirati young people.

The limitations on movement actually provided Marwa with some unknown benefits. Marwa used the time to learn new graphic methods and serve as the mediator for a popular internet website discussion board. Marwa’s work as mediator provided a valuable opportunity to be involved in the exchange of ideas with different people about many interesting topics. Marwa’s interactions on the internet provided an avenue to discuss important issues with both men and women without damaging her reputation.

Case 4: Mai

Mai was the fourth participant to volunteer for the research project. Mai did not want her voice or image recorded, so text messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Mai was a first year student studying in a government University in Abu Dhabi. Her major was undecided. Mai was 17 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was approximately 4 hours.

Mai described her family and her leisure activities.

[I have] three sisters and one brother. They are all younger than me. My mother is Canadian. [We speak] both [English and Arabic] at home but I usually speak English with my friends and I prefer to watch American movies and British or Canadian news programs. [I have been to Canada] three times as well as America and Europe but I haven't been there recently, to Canada, I mean.

People are very different [in Canada] and the culture is a lot more open. I don't like close-mindedness, but because we [UAE nationals] are Muslims, we must respect each other's privacy and we should respect ourselves and others in public. It's just that for swimming and exercising and some other things, I think that women are more comfortable alone together. Men can do other things, but in those countries [North America and Europe], men and women are together all the time and it is sort of tiresome. [Even] the schools are mixed with males and females together in the classrooms.

[My friends and I do] many things. We have friends at our homes and drink tea or coffee or we can go to the ladies' clubs here [in Abu Dhabi]. [The ladies' club that I go to] is very nice. There is a restaurant, a gym, and places to

shop, plus a pool and a ladies only beach. There are also tennis courts and basketball courts. In the ladies' clubs we can wear anything we want and do anything we want. Also I can go to so many places with my mother or my friends like to the mall or the cinema or anyplace I want.

Most of my friends like to go to the shopping malls. There are two [that we like in Abu Dhabi] but we prefer to shop in Dubai because there are more shops that we like there. We have shops here [in the UAE] from many different area of the world because there are people here from many areas of the world. My favorite [shops] are Mango, Stradivarius, Mossimo Dutti, and Paris Gallery. There is also an American shop I like called Forever 21. [My friends and I buy] mostly clothes, shoes, and perfumes. I like to buy clothes that are nice and modern. I can see [the models] in magazines, in advertisements, and on TV and I can see what people wear. So I buy the clothes I like.

But I have noticed that sometimes people [from other countries, maybe tourists] look at me in a weird way when my friends and I are shopping. Maybe because we wear shaila [covering for head, usually black] and abaya [long black cloak-like outer dress] [over our regular clothes], people think that we just wear boring clothes underneath. But we like to wear nice clothes underneath.

Sometimes that bothers me. It's not really a big deal, but sometimes my friends and I are bothered by the way people [from other countries] think of us because people [from other countries] think that since we're covered and maybe more shy in public that we don't have a good time at home [or with other women] or that we just wear boring clothes [and do boring things].

Mai described the decision-making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education and important aspects of her high school experience.

They [parents] were used to the idea so they sent me to private schools to get the best education from the first [years in school]. Most of my friends wanted to go [to college or to university] but there were a few who just wanted to get married and start a family.

In my high school there were both male and female teachers and they taught us only in English but we had to take Arabic and Islamic studies classes in Arabic. We also had to take the UAE Ministry of Education Exams at the end of each year. It was a requirement and the exams were very difficult. The exams tested our reading, grammar in Arabic, and the Islamic exams tested our reading in Arabic and memorization of the Quran and also the teachings of Islam.

I think that English is very essential [in the modern world]. The English classes [in my school] were very beneficial to me because it's easier to get a job [in the UAE] if you speak more than one language. Actually, I think it is the most beneficial [subject I studied at school]. There are many people from other countries [living and visiting the UAE] and many of them don't speak Arabic. Most [sales people or waiters] know both [English and Arabic] languages. So if they think you are an Arab, they speak to you in Arabic, but if not, they will speak to you in English. Sometimes, it is not easy to know [if a person is an Arab or is not an Arab] but usually you can know from the clothes people wear. Most local people go out in traditional clothes like the shaila and abaya for women and

kandoura [floor length one pieces garment] for men. Some people from other Arabic countries wear clothes like European or American style but many Muslim women wear scarves [to cover their hair]. Then there are some clothes that mostly Pakistani or Indian people wear [usually white or light color extremely loose pants with a large tunic style shirt for men] or a sari and other people like people from China or the Philippines are easy [to distinguish from Arabs].

Mai described her college experience and work related issues.

Every student receives [purchases] a laptop to use for their studies. I think it is very helpful because then the library is not as crowded [as it used to be when students had to use desktop computers in the library] and students can learn on modern computers. [The exams at the University are] somewhat more difficult [than the exams in high school] but the instructors are very helpful. [The instructors] are always available to help us and answer questions if we need extra help. I like it here [at the University].

There are many types of jobs for women here [in the UAE]. A lot of women work in government jobs like Etisalat [the telecommunications company], police stations, the airport, government offices, and some women work in private companies or start their own companies. Most people [that I know] want government jobs or to have their own business or want to work for a big international company in a good job. The public sector jobs usually pay more and have better hours and more holidays than private sector jobs. I have not decided [where I want to work] yet, but I think I still have time to decide. Maybe I will work for a Ministry.

[There are] not really [any difficulties for working women in the UAE].

Most people have housemaids and drivers [to] help with cooking, cleaning, or having someone to care for children [while the mother is at work].

Shaikh Zayed has put the country's wealth back into the people by providing education opportunities and has given the women more opportunities to learn and to be treated like equals [to men]. He made laws that made education for men and women the same and made special colleges and universities for women and made education free [for all UAE nationals in government institutions.]

People are more understanding now than they were [in the past]. For instance, 20 years ago there weren't as many programs as there are now [for women]. It was [more] important for boys and men go to work and to make money for their families. But now there are many jobs and the country has grown a lot so there is more of a need for women to work and be educated.

I think that some girls want to go to college to have a degree. Some girls want to get married and not work and some girls want to work. Some girls want to work to help [develop] their country, help their husbands [with the financial responsibilities], or to just not sit at home.

I hope to finish my studies and then maybe get married, but I want to have my own job and life first. Many [students] are engaged or soon will get engaged. Some of the girls my age are already married. Many of the girls my age are very excited about marriage, but others, like me, do not want to rush into marriage. I want to find a job first because I want to be more independent. Sometimes

problems happen if a girl marries a man from her own family [it is acceptable for relatives as close as first-cousins to marry in the Islamic religion] because if they have problems, other people from the family get involved. [UAE] national girls usually wait for a man to come and ask her father about [marrying] them. But sometimes the girl will meet the man without her parents knowing but he would have to get to know the parents [of the girl] without telling [the parents] that he knows [their daughter]. But that is really rare. Then the parents will tell the girl that someone has come to ask for her and if her parents like him and she agrees, she will meet him.

We have a modern country with everything that any other country has. And ladies here can do everything that ladies do in any other country like drive a car, work, study, go anyplace. Well, we have freedom here, just like anyplace. We saw the rest of the world and decided that the UAE should follow in [the world's] footsteps to grow as a nation.

Discussion of Mai's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the [UNESCO Education For All \(EFA\) Report \(2003\)](#) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. Mai was the oldest of five siblings in her family and the only one old enough to attend university. Mai attended private primary and secondary schools in preparation for her attending post-secondary education.

Working children. None of Mai's siblings participated in work at the expense of schooling.

Traditional practices. Mai perceived that the custom marrying within the family could cause problems within families and was not intending to do so.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Not an issue with Mai.

Decent and free school. Although the public schools were free, Mai's family chose to send her to private school in preparation for attending post-secondary education.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools. Mai perceived her teachers in private school and her instructors in the university to be effective, supportive, and encouraging.

Educational representation. According to Mai, Emirati women can work in any occupation they choose, however, most Emirati men and women prefer to work in the public sector or start their own businesses. Mai stated that she would like to work for a Ministry in the future.

Mai attributed most of the encouragement for women to work to Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the late UAE President, who used the oil wealth to invest in educating the population. Most importantly, according to Mai, Shaikh Zayed enacted laws guaranteeing Emirati women equal access to free education up through six years of post-secondary education, established segregated educational facilities for women, and created opportunities for women to enter the workplace. Emirati society had become

more tolerant of women entering the workforce because, according to Mai, “the country has grown a lot and there is more of a need for women to work and be educated.”

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

Mai perceived finishing her studies and getting a job before getting married as important for establishing her independence. Mai thought that establishing herself professionally and financially was important for her future well-being as evidenced by her statement, “Many of the girls my age are very excited about marriage, but others like me, do not want to rush into marriage. I want to find a job first because I want to be more independent.” This statement shows that Mai has taken time to reflect on her society, her own situation in her society, and has devised her own her own strategy for coping with it. Mai described the range of future aspirations of some of her friends: a) getting married and not working; b) studying to “have a degree”; c) working to help to develop the country; d) working to contribute to household expenses; e) working to escape the boredom of staying at home.

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Mai had a supportive family who were able to pay for her private school education. Mai benefited from having a native English-speaking mother because both English and Arabic were both spoken in the household making Mai fluent in both languages. Mai benefited from traveling abroad to Canada which made her more aware of different lifestyles and caused her to reflect more on the Emirati culture which she considered her own and western culture which she considered foreign. Mai was able to

select aspects of each culture that she considered desirable and incorporate them into her own culture.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Mai did not consider that Emirati women faced more difficulties than Emirati men in obtaining jobs. Specifically, the abundance of reasonably priced domestic helpers such as housemaids and drivers provided the needed assistance for working women to manage with the household responsibilities.

Mai considered English proficiency to be the most important requirement for entering the workforce in the UAE because the UAE contained an international mix of citizens, residents, tourists, and visitors. According to Mai, most of the expatriate workers in restaurants and shops were able to speak in English and Arabic but most of the expatriate employees in companies spoke only English. So, to get a good job, English proficiency was a must.

Mai perceived being modern as important in her life. She and her friends were somewhat bothered by others, especially foreigners, perceiving Emiratis as being “non-modern” based on outward appearances. Mai implied that she thought that foreigners making judgments about Emirati culture was unfair and went into great detail describing how Emirati women engaged in segregated but similar activities as western women.

Mai touched on the Emirati notion of privacy based on the Islamic religion. As noted by Mai, most Emirati women chose to wear the shaila and abaya, so participating in activities including swimming, sports, exercising in the gym, or engaging in social

situations in which women wanted relax, try on different clothes, go to the salon, and so on required “privacy” from men. As a researcher’s note, the notion of modesty in the Islamic religion is not only in dress but also in behavior. Many Muslim and Arab women prefer to socialize in segregation not only to shed their outer garments and scarves but also to relax, laugh, joke, listen to music, dance, and so on. Engaging in such activities, even with the outer coverings and scarves, would not be considered dignified in public (mixed settings) and could invite unwanted advances from onlookers or stain their reputations.

In the workplace, Emiratis encountered many expatriate workers who held their own notions of social acceptability and as Mai mentioned, Emirati notions of modesty were sometimes considered “non-modern” and therefore, inferior. Mai asserted that the UAE was “a modern country with everything that any other country has” and that Emirati women “can do everything that ladies do in any other country . . . we have freedom here, just like anyplace.” In Mai’s opinion, Emirati women participating in segregated social events was not limiting their freedom, but rather, giving them the privacy they desired to “be free” and relaxed.

Case 5: Maitha

Maitha was the first participant to volunteer for the research project. Maitha did not want her voice or image recorded, so internet instant messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Maitha was a second year student studying Information Technology in a federally funded college in Dubai. She was 20 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was a total of 8 hours and 5 minutes.

Maitha was enthusiastic about participating in the research study as evidenced by several encouraging comments during the interview sequence.

Am I the first student? You are more than welcome, I am happy to do these interviews with you. I am happy that you are working with me and I am very happy to do the interviews with you any time. [After a missed appoint and a three day absence from being online, Maitha sent the following message] Sorry, miss, I can't complete the interview now. My computer has a virus but I came to this internet café to tell you that I can meet you tomorrow at the same time. I enjoy doing the interviews with you.

Maitha described her family and the decision-making process that let her to participate in post-secondary education.

[Maitha described her family as] a small family. I have one sister, three brothers, my parents, and my grandmother all living in one house. I am in the middle. I am the only one in my family to complete my study but my sister works in Internet City and my brothers work for the police. My father works in business.

[All of the members my family have completed high school except for my mother but] she plans to start high school next year and then she plans to go to college. My mother wants to study more, get a college certificate, and learn more things. Every day she comes to me and asks me what I am doing. Every day I show her something new and she learns something new. [Right now] my mother studies in a school for mothers with all female students and teachers. I think it is at the Women's Association.

If a lady did not go to college directly after high school, she will have to [finish] high school, then join the college. [Each] student gets a form to fill out in high school with questions about what she wants to study and where [she want to study]. If [the selection committee] accepts her, then [the selection committee] will write her name in the newspaper. Then she goes to the college to do an exam to see if she is excellent in English and math [if she passes the entrance criteria]. Students talk about going to college while they are still in high school especially about where they want to go and what they want to study.

It is normal for anyone to go to college if he [or she] wants to [go to college]. [Some of] my cousins went to college 20 years ago or more and they have good jobs now. My family never refused for me to go to college. It has been my dream since high school to go to college and work.

The day I was accepted at college I was so happy and excited because that was the first step to the world I wanted for my future. I want a nice job with a nice salary. [I want to] work with a group of different people from different countries. [I want to] learn about my job step by step. [I want to] solve the

[company's computer] problems from my office. I think jobs like that exist in many companies already. I want to complete the Bachelors program. I think that if I have a good certificate I can get a nice job with a good salary and benefits.

Maitha described her high school experience and her college experience.

In high school we had math, English, history, Arabic and geography. Students stayed the room and the teachers came to the classes. We didn't have any free time and we had homework every day. We had to memorize many things for the exams. The exams had questions from the whole year. The questions were multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and essay. The exams in high school were harder than the exams in college.

The first day [of college] I was very nervous but the teachers were friendly and it turned out ok in the end. The teachers are from all parts of the world, but mostly from America, Australia, Europe, India, and Arab countries. A teacher let me make up an exam in his office [after an absence of several days]. I think that he was [very kind and understanding]. [But sometimes the teachers are not kind and understanding]. We asked our teachers to move their exam dates because we had three exams in the same week. All of our teachers refused. We were very tired that week.

[I was disappointed at first because] I didn't get [in] Communications Technology [program]. [It was] my dream to study media or Communications Technology, but [I was] not allowed [to enroll] by the college [because my entrance exam scores were not high enough to get into the Higher Diploma program which offered the Communications Technology major]. So, instead I

chose Diploma Information Technology. But afterwards, I was content because [people who study] Information Technology must [like to] work on the computer 24 hours a day. [I think that] Information Technology is very important for any company and I really want to work in the Information Technology Department for a big company. [Now I realize that] Communications Technology [as it is offered in the college] is for people who like to see and speak with VIP people or famous people, not for people who want to work with computers.

My first class is at 8 am and I have 4 or 5 classes every day. There are 3 small breaks between classes and an hour for lunch. I finish classes at 2 or 3 pm.

At college we have more responsibility, we do projects with classmates, and we study all subjects in English. It is like having a new and exciting life full of challenges. The challenges include being on time to class every day, doing lots of homework, and working with other students in teams. We study English, math, and computers in different rooms. [We have] a lot of free time to do homework, to do extra activities, to meet with friends, or to do whatever we want. We did not have projects in high school.

We have many difficult things at the college, but we always find a way to do [them]. [For example] the college had a bazaar and I was the leader of a team that made a “Scary House” [as a place] for children to go into and see something scary and fun and have a great time. My duties as the leader [in preparing for the scary house] were deciding on the theme of the Scary House, assigning jobs to other students, and going to the store to buy decorations and gifts for the children.

The exams at the college were different [than the exams in high school]. The English [exam] in the college had four parts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The reading and writing [part of] the exam was a written exam. In the speaking exam, the teacher plays a cassette and we answer the questions on a paper. [The math exam was very different because] there were no multiple choice [questions]. Students did the work on the exam paper and were given partial credit if the [final] answer was wrong, but the process was right.

[Not all of Maitha's classmates returned for their second year in the college]. Some of my friends failed their exams. Some of them [decided to] stay home [and not return to college but] others will join again next year. [Some other students I know] will go to private universities and pay for their subjects. But families [of all of the students who failed] would feel bad because they want the best for their daughters.

I know [about some students] who were kicked out for cheating on the exam or using "copy and paste" for projects. Students who cheat will feel afraid of the college and their parents. Cheating is wrong and if she [had to] leave the college, her parents would know about her cheating. Her family will be ashamed.

[I know some] students who got married while they are in college. Some stopped because their husbands didn't want them to study. One of my friends stopped because she moved to another country where her husband was studying. Some others completed without any problems.

Maitha described work related issues.

Many people have used their voices to give women a chance to study and work. The law does not [distinguish between] men and women [and is] derived partly from Islamic laws. Islam is great for women. [But even though] Islam has a great value for women, when it comes to the country's laws, women and men are the same. Besides we have women's rights and these rights are international rights [rights that are similar to women in other countries]. If a lady has a problem, she can go the court to the guidance section [to get assistance or advice]. Women learn about their rights form newspapers, schools, and [from] people talking.

It is not more difficult for a woman to find a job than a man. Women can work without any problems. She can drive, she can talk [to men in work situations], she can have a certificate. I think that there is nothing difficult nowadays. All people [men and women] can do anything they want. There is nothing difficult as I know.

[I think that] it is better for women to work in offices and not go out during late night or evening hours. [Jobs with late night hours or jobs outside] are better for men. Examples of jobs that are good for women are schools, colleges, and offices [because they are comfortable and help her manage her time].

[Women who work in the military or police] probably did not complete their study. That's why they don't have another place to work. Women like to study and complete their studies to get a good certificate to work in the good jobs. Men just want to work and to collect money. Men are lazy, not like women. UAE ladies now work at the TV stations, the new, and in very important

programs. [Women] did what men did and [women] won [good jobs through a fair competition].

[If she has difficulty balancing her household duties and work], she can solve this problem with her husband. She can use daycare at work if they have a child care program. She can leave her children with her mother or other family members. She can have a housemaid at home to care for children and do the housework.

I think that it is the wish of every girl [to get married] and in my opinion, I think I should get married after I finish my studies. [When a girl gets married] she feels that she has someone to share life with her, someone she could lean on when she is sad, someone to share her happiness when she is happy, and the most important [part of marriage] is someone she could have kids with and create a family.

Women want to help [their husbands with the financial responsibilities] in the house. They can use the money [they earn from work] to put their children in “good private schools” [emphasis added by participant] which are very modern. Women like to work.

I think UAE girls like to open their minds and they want to be modern people. [Because] our country is modernized, men have reached all fields so why shouldn’t women reach [as far as they can].

Discussion of Maitha’s Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. Maitha's mother did not complete high school but was preparing to attend high school at a special center for women preparing to attend high school. All of Maitha's siblings and her father had completed high school and were working. Maitha's family did not oppose her participating post-secondary education and Maitha's mother was planning to attend college after she completed high school. Many of Maitha's female relatives earned degrees as much as 20 years before and were working in good jobs at the time of the interview, according to Maitha.

Working children. All of Maitha's siblings completed high school before working.

Traditional practices.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Not an issue to Maitha.

Decent and free school. Maitha attended public school free of charge.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools.

Educational representation. Maitha stated that Emirati women and men had equal rights and opportunities under the law to obtain an education and to get jobs. Maitha believed, however, that jobs with working hours late at night or jobs that required women to be outside the office were more appropriate for men.

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

Maitha wanted a “nice job with a good salary and benefits” and perceived participating in post-secondary education as necessary to achieve that goal. However, she specified that Emirati women wanted to work to contribute to the household expenses, to put their children in private schools, and to achieve self-satisfaction. In addition, Maitha mentioned that “UAE girls like to open their minds and to they want to be modern people.” Maitha mentioned that many Emirati men chose not to participate in post-secondary education because “men just want to work and to collect money. . . men are lazy not like women.” Maitha realized that with Emirati women achieving higher degrees and positions than Emirati men, two incomes would become necessary in the future.

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Normally, students only enter college or university the year after they finish high school. Women who drop out of high school at some point due to marriage, child birth, or other circumstance may resume high school then continue to post-secondary education afterward with no difficulties.

Maitha suffered from lack of career counseling. Maitha stated that studying media or Communications Technology was her dream. However, after studying Information Technology and having time to observe students who were studying Media, Maitha realized that her skills and aptitudes more closely matched the Information Technology major. Maitha did not have a clear idea about the Media, Communications Technology, or Information Technology majors and had to rely on her own observations at the college to form her opinions about the suitability of the majors for her.

Maitha stated that in public primary and secondary education, memorization was the main method of instruction and students passed the year by passing the annual comprehensive exams. Maitha stated that college instruction consisted of projects, teamwork, and more practical activities. Maitha found the transition difficult at first but later enjoyed the college experience and became the leader in many activities.

Students who failed English courses were suspended from the college for a period of one semester year. During the suspension time, students were required to attend private English instruction as a condition of re-admission the following year. Students caught cheating on exams or on projects were expelled from college according to the cheating policy; thereby, bringing shame to herself and her family.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

Maitha stated that “it is not more difficult for a women to find a job than a man.” Maitha asserted that many options existed to assist women in managing the household responsibilities such as daycare facilities, housemaids, or help from family members. Maitha wanted to get married when she completed her post-secondary education.

Case 6: Fatima

Fatima was the third participant to volunteer for the research project. Fatima did not want her voice or image recorded, so text messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Fatima graduated from a government college in Dubai majoring in Finance. Fatima was 21 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was a total of approximately 5 hours.

Fatima used many Arabic phrases and typed sometimes in Arabic especially when she did not want to answer a question or was tired and wanted to end the interview session. Many of the phrases that Fatima used were common phrases used by Muslims in routine situations such as saying “inshallah” which means “if God wills” when referring to future events.

Fatima liked joke with the researcher as evidenced by numerous “emoticons” she used. For example, Fatima stated that the “teachers were friendly”. When the researcher asked her to describe a time when a teacher was being friendly she gave the “winking smiley emoticon” and asked to answer the question later in the interview.

Fatima described the decision-making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education and her college experience.

I thought about going to college for a long time, but I didn’t really decide to go until I was in the last course in high school The Ministry of Education sent a letter to each student at the high school. The letter came with an application form for college. Many students discussed with each other where to go. My family didn’t have any problems with [me going to college]. They were happy for me. Many of my aunts studied in the government colleges. Many [family members]

on my mother's side [of the family] have high degrees from universities in the UAE or from America.

Now it's not difficult to study. Shaikh Zayed,]the late President of the UAE], supported women's education. [The government encouraged women to study] by making education free, making schools for women [only], and by making men and women equal in everything, [but having] schools for women only helped [women] the most. Everyone can learn, [but many men] don't want to study. [When the researcher asked Fatima to give an example of something that made it difficult for women to study with men, she gave the "winking smiley" emoticon and asked to quit for that session].

At the college, I learned something new every day. The colleges had men and women teachers. The teachers were friendly and helpful. [When asked to give an example of a teacher being friendly, Fatima gave the "winking smiley" emoticon and, using Arabic, asked to answer that question later in the interview.]

Education [for UAE nationals] is free but some girls didn't go to college because [their families] couldn't afford the laptop. Other girls didn't go to college because their parents refused for them to go.

[The two things that were difficult for me in college were] having men teachers and studying in English. [Men teachers are supposed knock and a wait a few minutes before entering a classroom so that female students can adjust their head covers and be "presentable," but] some men teachers didn't really knock or give us enough time to get ready. [Fatima considered not knocking loudly enough to be heard or not waiting long enough as being inconsiderate on the part of the

male teachers.] Some teachers [male and female] spoke English quickly and didn't explain well. Sometimes different teachers [from different countries including North America, Ireland, UK, South Africa, Australia, and Greece] spoke English in different ways.

I knew some students who failed their exams. Some of them stayed out of college for one year, then returned the next year and passed. Some stayed at home. Some went to private colleges and paid [tuition]. The private colleges are not as good as the government colleges because you pay [the private college] and [the private college] will pass you even if you don't know anything.

I know some students who were kicked out of the college. Some of them were kicked out [of the college] because they failed more than one exam. [Some of them were kicked out of the college because] they didn't study well. Some students said they didn't know why they were kicked out, but I think that they were ashamed to tell the real reason. If a student failed, her family will be sad or they will think she didn't study well.

I knew some students who got married in college. Some of their husbands allowed them to continue and some [husbands] did not. It all depends on how he thinks. [But even if he agrees] it will be difficult for her because she has to work at home and at college. She will have to take care of her house, her husband, and later children.

Fatima described her work experience and work-related issues.

[Fatima worked in many summer jobs and work placement experiences including] Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, Dubai Courts, National Bank of Sharjah, Emirates Petroleum Company, Dubai Summer Festival, and the IMF Meeting held in Dubai. [Her duties included] answering phones, doing data entry and other computer work, and greeting people.

[At the time of the interview, Fatima was working] at the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology [as] an accountant [during the day and studying in the afternoon]. [Her duties included] reimbursing employees for work expenses, deciding which expenses should be reimbursed for each employee, and purchasing office equipment and office supplies. At the beginning, I learned new things every day, but later every day [was] the same.

I want to change my job because I like change. I want to complete my finance degree at the bachelors level because what I learned [so far] is not enough for me in this life. [So far], I have learned how to use the computer and how to enter data into the computer. [I have learned] how to use the computer in English and speak, read, and write in English with some people and Arabic with other people. I know the differences between business expenses and personal expenses [and other things about business]. I know how to deal with people and how to treat people. I learned how to trust people, and be patient, and to be confident. I want to change my job because I like to change and learn more about life and learn about different jobs.

[Finding a good job is not easy but the college prepared me very well because] I had to take an exam [to get the job I have]. First, I had to apply, then

do an interview, then take a difficult exam. The exam had three parts. The first part was a 30 minute math test which was over everything from primary school to college. The second part [of the exam] was a 45 minute reading and writing test. The third part was a computer test with a typing part and a MS Office part. All the interviews were in English [so speaking in English was also tested.]

[Fatima listed jobs suitable for women as jobs including] secretary, TV or news broadcaster, police, or pilot [but she stated that] security [was not suitable. When asked to describe things that made a job suitable or unsuitable [for Emirati women] Fatima replied, [in Arabic] that's just the way it is.

It is important for [women] to work and open our minds. Women [in the UAE] want to study because they want to improve themselves and show the rest of the world, especially the rest of the Arab world, what we can do.

Discussion of Fatima's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. Fatima chose not to share the details of her immediate family but did state that her family was “happy” for her to go to college. In addition, Fatima stated that many women on her mother’s side of the family held degrees from the UAE and American universities.

Working children. Fatima had worked in may summer jobs and was working in the morning and attending college in the afternoon. She was able to work and study at the same time.

Traditional practices.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability.

Decent and free school. Fatima stated education in the UAE was free to all UAE nationals and that establishing “schools for women only helped [women] the most” to participate in education at all levels.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools. Fatima stated that although she considered her college instructors competent and friendly, she perceived some of her male teachers as not respecting Emirati notions of privacy and modesty.

Educational representation. Fatima stated that the government, in particular Shaikh Zayed, the late President of the UAE, publicly supported and encouraged women’s education and entrance into the workplace. Fatima stated that the government “made men and women equal in everything”

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

In Fatima’s case, working, even in the preferred public sector at entry-level, was not satisfying enough for her. The following statement summed up her expected return

on education, Emirati women “want to improve themselves and show the rest of the world, especially the Arab world, what we can do.”

Q3. What challenges did the participants face when participating in post-secondary education or when considering participating in post-secondary education?

Fatima stated students she knew left the college for various reasons. Some were suspended for failing English or other courses. Some were expelled for failing course repeatedly and some students were expelled for reasons that they did not want to disclose to Fatima. Some students left the college after marriage.

Students leaving the college had the options of a) putting their educations on hold, b) attending private colleges or universities by paying tuition, c) trying to find a job without a degree or certificate. Most UAE nationals preferred to attend government colleges and universities, if possible, not only for the free tuition but also for the reputation and integrity of the government colleges and universities. Contrary to western notions, the Emiratis perceived that tuition charging institutions passed students who did not meet educational standards in order to collect tuition rather than failing students who did not perform well. The government sponsored colleges and universities, in the perspective of the Emiratis, did not collect tuition so they were not obligated to pass students who did not perform well. Many Emirati families considered failing courses at a government college or university shameful since the government gave the opportunity to the students free of charge.

Fatima stated that in some programs students were required to purchase laptop computers and that some students who could not afford computers were not able to attend college.

Q4. What challenges did the participants anticipate in realizing the perceived benefit to participating in post-secondary education? In what ways did the participants anticipate overcoming those challenges?

At the time of the interview, Fatima was working and studying. Fatima had many summer job experiences and was working in the preferred public sector. However, she was not content as illustrated by the statement, “I want to change my job because I like to change and learn more about different jobs.” Another statement clarified her meaning, “I want to complete my finance degree at the bachelors level because what I learned [so far] is not enough for me in this life.” Fatima discovered that entry level work was not satisfying enough for her, even though working in the preferred public sector even at entry-level was the desire of many young Emirati men and women. Fatima wanted to continue her education and develop herself enough to move on to a more personally and professionally challenging position.

Fatima considered some jobs unsuitable for women but when asked to give examples aspects that made jobs unsuitable for women, Fatima replied only “that’s just the way it is.” From the list of jobs that Fatima considered suitable and unsuitable, this researcher noticed that all the jobs mentioned as suitable were performed by Emirati men and Emirati women. On the other hand, neither Emirati men nor Emirati women serve as security guards, so the issue of appropriateness was not really gender related but more related to cultural appropriateness.

Case 7: Hend

Hend was the second participant to volunteer for the research project. Hend did not want her voice or image recorded, so text messaging was chosen as the means of communication for the interviews. Hend was an Information Technology student in her second year studying at a government college in Dubai. Hend was 19 years old and single. The elapsed time for the interview sequence was a total of approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes.

Hend expressed an eagerness to participate in the study as evidenced by her statement, “I am really interested in helping you.” But, despite her eagerness to participate in the study, Hend dropped out after only one interview session. She did not respond to any of the researcher’s emails inquiring about her, nor did she appear “online” in the messaging service. Her last comment was “I was using the phone line and now somebody else has to use the phone. See you soon, miss.”

Hend described her family and the decision-making process that led her to participate in post-secondary education.

I have two brothers and four sisters. I am the second daughter. My older sister graduated the year before me but she is not working. My other brothers and sisters are younger than me. My mother and father graduated from high school.

I decided to go to college when I finished high school. All nationals can go to college if they had good marks [so] my marks were ok so I wanted to go to college. [My family] was happy [that I wanted to go to college].

Hend described her college experience, her work experience and work-related issues.

I have four classes each day [in college]. Two are Information Technology courses and two are English courses. During my long break I do my homework for the next day or work on projects with other students. During the lunch break I eat and chat with friends. In the smaller breaks, I go to the LRC [learning resource center – library] to read a book or use my laptop. I usually have enough time to complete my homework at the college.

The college rules were difficult at first especially the late and absent [policy], warning letters, and missed exam [policy]. [But, on the positive side] students use laptops in the class and on most assignments. Teachers use laptops when instructing. Students study only four subjects at one time not six or seven like [students must study] in high school. In high school, students are treated as students only but in college students are treated as more [than high school students].

I worked in Etisalat [the government telecommunications company] as a two months summer job. I used the computer to insert data into the network. One lady showed me how and I did [the job] after that. I had more responsibility at work than I had at college. I learned that my work affected [the work of] others. I want to work for Etisalat after college. I know the work. I will have a big salary and if I get high marks in college, Etisalat will take me [as a permanent employee].

Discussion of Hend's Responses as Related to the Primary Research Questions

Q1. In what ways and to what extent were the obstacles to female participation in education identified in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) Report (2003) experienced by the participants?

Household dynamics. Both of Hend's parents graduated from high school. One sister had graduated from college but was not working. All other siblings were not college age. Hend stated that her family was "happy" that she wanted to go to college.

Working children. Hend had summer jobs but was able to attend college during the academic year.

Traditional practices. No information provided by participant.

HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. No information provided by participant.

Decent and free school. Hend mentioned that her college experience was more modern than her high school experience. The college had more rules but the students had more freedom and learning opportunities in college than in high school.

Trained Staff and female role models in schools. No information provided by the participant.

Educational representation. No information provided by the participant.

Q2. What returns on their educational investment did the participants expect to gain?

Hend had a summer job at Etisalat and thought that if she completed her degree, Etisalat would take her as a permanent employee. Hend wanted a job with a good salary and benefits but only at Etisalat.

Hend did not give any information regarding questions 3 and 4.

Chapter V: Discussion

Chapter five discusses the themes and commonalities between the cases, relates the evidence back to the themes that emerged in the literature review, and gives this researcher's conclusions.

Issues Identified in the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report

The following is a review of the challenges to female participation in education in developing countries identified by UNESCO, strategies that governments can implement to enhance female participation in education, and participant responses concerning those topics. Government strategies are discussed first as most of the potential challenges relate directly to government policies.

The specific obstacles to females participating in education identified by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report ("Gender," 2003) are listed along with evidence given by the participants and conclusions of this researcher.

1. Household dynamics. All of the participants had completed secondary school, were participating in post-secondary education, or had completed post-secondary education regardless of the educational level of the mothers, or whether the mother contributed financially to the household income contradicting the UNESCO report. One explanation is that since the UAE government provided extensive in social services including free medical care and education subsidizing the incomes of UAE nationals ("United Arab Emirates," 2005), the supplementary income of the wife was not necessary. Emirati women in the generation of the participants' mothers stayed at home, raised their children, managed the

- household, and most importantly, contributed to the household decision-making without contributing substantial income to the household.
2. Working children. Neither the participants nor siblings worked outside the home at the expense of schooling although some participants held summer jobs or worked and studied simultaneously.
 3. Traditional practices: All of the participants stated that the government gave women and men equal rights under the law. However, most of the participants gave examples of cultural practices that limited women's ability to participate in post-secondary education or realize the benefits of a post-secondary education including Emirati marriage customs, limited freedom of movement, requiring male chaperones of study abroad, and requiring permission of male family members to accept jobs. The limiting cultural practices identified by the participants were similar to those identified by women in other Arab counties as noted by Alajmi (2001), Al-Arifi (1994), Lattouf (1999), Rabo (2000), Samergandi (1992), and Shakhatreh (1991). However, the UAE government enacted legislation designed to enable women to participate in post-secondary education and enter the workplace in contrast to the governments of Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen.
 4. HIV/AIDS, conflict, and disability. Participants did not mention HIV/AIDS, conflict, or disability.
 5. Decent and free school. The participants commented that the government provided free education to Emirati males and females up through 6 years of post-secondary education. Transportation was provided to women who needed

transportation and facilities were built in all major areas so that women could travel safely to college or university. Establishing segregated schools, colleges, and universities was the key to promoting female participation in education at all levels according to several participants.

6. Trained Staff and female role models in schools: All public primary and secondary schools were segregated and had same-sex teachers. However, both male and female teachers were hired in some private primary and secondary schools. In the government colleges and universities, instructors were both male and female, most of the instructors were native English speakers, and all instructors held academic credentials from North America, the UK, Australia, or South Africa. According to three participants, the instructors and professors motivated students to do their best and provided them with an opportunity to practice English on a daily basis. All participants generally liked and respected their instructors. One participant mentioned that although she was comfortable with male instructors, some male teachers did not respect Emirati notions of modesty in the Emirati culture.
7. Educational representation. The UAE government was highly supportive of women in the workforce. However, not all jobs were considered suitable for Emirati women. Jobs that brought local men and local women into close and prolonged contact, physically demanding jobs, or manual labor including service jobs were not considered suitable for Emirati women. In addition, most Emirati men and women preferred jobs in the public sector. However, with stiff competition and little chance of promotion, Emirati women were entering the

private sector in increasing numbers. As an incentive, the government started enacting emiratization laws establishing minimum quotas for Emiratis the most lucrative sectors of the economy. Companies in the selected sectors which do not meet the minimum quotas faced fines and having the work permit visas revoked for non-Emirati employees.

All six of the participants who completed the interview sequence mentioned that the government supported women's education. According to the participants, the UAE government supported women's education, defrayed the cost of education, and empowered women to gain equal access to education, employment, and participation in society. Specific policies enacted by the UAE government identified by the participants included:

1. Making education compulsory from ages 5 to 11 for boys and girls (6 participants);
2. Setting up special schools for mothers who had not completed high school (2 participants).
3. Establishing federally funded women's colleges in parallel with men's colleges and establishing two women's universities (six participants). According to three participants, establishing segregated campuses were very important because many Emirati women would not want to attend non-segregated campuses nor would most Emirati women be allowed by their families to attend non-segregated campuses.
4. Providing convenient and comfortable transportation for women (two participants).

5. Making education at all levels free including up to six years of post-secondary education for qualifying UAE nationals (six participants). One participant mentioned, however, that some programs had expensive requirements such as purchasing a laptop computer as a pre-requisite which caused some women not to attend.
6. Reminding students of their right to attend post-secondary education during their last year of high school in a letter to parents with an enclosed application form (4 participants).
7. Establishing federally funded colleges in most major cities for men and women. As women required chaperones to attend educational institutions outside the UAE, establishing post-secondary education institutions inside the UAE became essential to enabling women to participate in post-secondary education and subsequently enter the workforce. The majors offered were related to vocational areas that the government perceived as important in the workforce (3 participants). Women's colleges offered majors such as business, finance, education, information technology, media, communications technology, health science, and so on. Engineering was offered at the men's and women's colleges and seemed very popular among the participants' brothers who attended college. Two participants were taking general studies at the women's universities at the time of the interviews. All of the participants enjoyed their post-secondary educational experience and believed that they were being adequately prepared for their future. The concentration of majors around technology supports the findings

of Nashif (2000) that post-secondary education in technology areas provides women in Arab countries with a means for upward social mobility.

8. Gave women legal rights as men to study and gain employment. (six participants).

The six participants who completed the interview sequence mentioned that women were granted the same rights as men in society by law. However, at least by tradition, women were treated different from men in some situations. One participant mentioned that women had to get permission from their parents (or husband) before they could work. Four participants mentioned that they knew of students who were not allowed to attend college by parents or husbands when the students got married.

Issues Raised in the National Report (UAE Ministry of Education, 2001)

Five participants mentioned that the public primary and secondary education in the UAE did not prepare them for success in post-secondary education. Reasons given by the participants included: the educational experience was boring and used rote methods, students were busy all the time, no extra-curricular activities existed, homework was given every day, exams were based on memorization and were commonly based on models given in advance. According to the same five participants, English instruction was especially ineffective in the public schools because the English instruction was delivered by Arab speakers in Arabic, employed mostly memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, and was not practiced. Two participants were sent to private schools which used English as the medium of instruction in several subjects in high school. Two participants learned English on their own. One participant's mother gave her English

instruction in the home when she was very young. One participant's mother was a native English speaker and her family spoke both English and Arabic in the home.

Other Topics From the Literature Review

Career preparation

The responses of four participants indicated a lack of career preparation. All of the participants had older female family members who had previously participated in post-secondary education, and several had female relatives who had worked supporting Al-Adhab (1992) and Al-Arafi, (1994).

Factors affecting academic success in the UAE: Parental involvement, segregated institutions and self-esteem).

The responses of all the participants indicated Emirati families encouraged, or did not discourage, their daughters in participating in post-secondary education. Although the parents did not actively participate in primary or secondary school activities, the participants' mothers were responsible for assisting children with their studies in the home supporting Al-Taneiji (2001).

All seven participants indicated that establishing segregated educational institutions was the key to female participation in post-secondary education. However, the reasons were cultural not the academic reasons given by Perry (2000).

One participant mentioned that she regularly underestimated her performance while waiting for her exam scores or final marks in a course so that she would be excited when she received her mark. This participant indicated that she usually received the mark she prepared for, but liked to underestimate her performance to her friends and herself. Six of the seven participants gave responses indicating that they were self-

confident and self-motivated. Five participants remarked that students often had challenges but always managed to overcome them. One participant remarked that making choices and other challenging activities helped her to "grow as a person." The responses of participants supported Al-Darmaki(1998) rather than Al-megta (1996) in that female Emirati students were self-confident but appear to be self-effacing or lacking in self-confidence to westerners due to religious or cultural practice.

Women and social change.

Six of the seven participants indicated that men were not as interested in post-secondary education as women were. Four of the seven participants considered men as obstacles to women in the workplace. One participant referred to men as the "the greatest challenge to women in the UAE." Three participants discussed the changing roles of men and women. According to the three participants, women wanted to study to get a job and draw a salary. But the salary, itself, was not the goal. Women wanted to be able to provide for their children if necessary. Women wanted to develop themselves and become similar "modern women" in other countries. Women wanted to help develop their country. Women were beginning to realize that the salaries of their potentially less educated future husbands would not be enough to provide adequately for their families. Women were beginning to realize that a suitable man might not come along to propose to them or that after marriage the man might turn out to be unsuitable. In all of those cases, women had to get a post-secondary education for their own security and the security of her children as described by Al Doei & Al Serkal, (1999), Ali (2001), Alsawad (1991), Khatibi (1994), and Mohammad (2002).

Four of the participants indicated a general sense of men failing to uphold the cultural standards that the women were expected to uphold. One participant mentioned that men had the freedom to do whatever they wanted to do, so many times they chose to have fun rather than study or work. Three other participants mentioned that women had more restrictions than men had and the limited freedom led women to study. Women with limited freedom studied to get out of the house, to prepare for a better future, to place themselves in a position to be independent, and to have more choices in the future. The stricter social expectations of women in Emirati society contributed to women outnumbering men in post-secondary educational persistence.

Five of the participants indicated that their notions of right and wrong were based on Islamic teachings and that most social problems resulted from people, particularly men, disregarded Islamic teachings. The women in prison described by Butti (1999) illustrated the problems that women found when abandoning the Islamic teachings even when the men managed to evade the punishment by lying or other means. Three participants gave examples of ways in which Emiratis disregarded Islamic teachings. Two other participants stated that Emiratis accepting western notions, styles, and behaviors unconditionally causes many social problems and supported the limited censorship on media in the UAE as opposed to Al-Serkal (1999). The participants indicated that they were aware of the difference between cultural practices and religious practices.

As Al-Oraimi (2004) pointed out that Emirati women preferred to address political issues through women's organizations rather than through individual confrontations with government officials or government organizations. In the opinion of

this researcher, Emirati women did not perceive the problems in the society as stemming from inequality, rather, Emirati women perceived the problems in Emirati society as stemming from a lack of responsibility Emirati men. Emirati women wanted to contribute to society while preserving the peace of the society, rather than by creating chaos that women perceived to be damaging in the long run. Islamic teachings recommend “patient perseverance” as the means to accomplishing difficult tasks. Emirati women were demonstrating “patient perseverance” as advocated by the Islamic religion. Al-Oriami stated that Emirati women were “still unaware of the influence and the potential disadvantages of the systematic division of gender on their lives in short and long terms.” However, in the opinion of this researcher, Emirati women viewed division of gender as a supportive mechanism, as do many Muslim women, not a hindering mechanism. The notion that men and women must compete with each other rather than complement each other is a Western notion that is rapidly being imposed on societies in developing countries.

Education related experiences of Arab or Muslim women outside the UAE.

The experiences of Emirati women were similar to other Arab and Muslim women's experiences. Emirati women perceived their world as changing as were other Arab and Muslim women as described by Lootah (1999) and Al-Dhaheri (1998). Emirati women were attempting to examine their situations, and to re-define themselves and their roles in society. Emirati women maintained the traditional roles of wife and mother as their central identity and their careers as a supplement to their family roles not in competition with their family roles as related by Nashif (2000) and Lattouf (1999). Emirati women were able to maintain the dual roles mainly because of the abundance of

affordable domestic assistance and the need for families to have an income source other than the husband's income.

The neo-patriarchal societal changes occurring in the Arab world described by Nashif (2000) and Lattouf (1999) were occurring in the UAE as well, however, the UAE government was making a concerted effort to include women in every aspect of the economic and social development. Women were not expected to enter only the education and health care sectors as in most Arab countries, women were accepted into most commercial sectors and were especially encouraged to join the private sector. The appointment of Shaikha Lubna Al-Qassimi as Minister of Economy and Planning indicated that women were being included in the economic development of the country at all levels. Emirati women did not want to give up their primary roles as wives and mothers. Five of the seven participants mentioned that marriage was their dream and they wanted families in the future.

Several participants mentioned that the most important perceived benefits of participating in post-secondary education and entering the workforce were not monetary. The participants indicated that Emirati women want to contribute the development of their country; provide some stability for their family, particularly their children; but, most importantly, show the world, particularly the Arab world, "what they can do." As Sulaiman (2001) and Jarkmani (2004) pointed out, many negative stereotypes existed about Arabs, particularly Arab women, and were solidified in the western media after the events of September 11, 2001. Emirati women were trying to demonstrate that some Arab women were making a difference in their own societies.

Recommendations

This researcher recommends that research be extended in the following ways:

The study should be repeated using a more varied pool of participants.

1. Emirati men should be interviewed to gain the male perspective on women participating in post-secondary education and entering the workforce. How do Emirati men perceive high numbers of Emirati women participating in post-secondary education and entering the workplace? What are the positive and negative aspects of marrying educated and working Emirati women from the Emirati man's point of view?
2. Emirati men should be interviewed to gain information about the low numbers of Emirati men attending post-secondary education. Does the male view match the female view?
3. Married women and women with children should be interviewed. In what ways do husbands assist or hinder women who participate in post-secondary education or enter the workplace.
4. Women who did not participate in post-secondary education should be interviewed to gain their perspectives on participating in post-secondary education and entering the workplace.

Conclusion

This study presented seven individual Emirati women's viewpoints about issues related to participating in post-secondary education. The seven cases were presented separately then combined with each other and the literature to present a richer glimpse into Emirati society.

The study discussed the challenges to educational participation that women faced in developing countries identified by the UNESCO (2003) Global Monitoring Report.

According to the participants in this study, the UAE government has tried to encourage women to participate in post-secondary education and to seek employment. UAE laws and government policies guarantee legal equality to women and men, but traditional practices and attitudes often disadvantage women in the home and in the workplace.

Most of the participants defined their sense of morality in terms of their Islamic identity and believed that the growing social problems resulted as a lack of members of society, particularly men, to follow their Islamic teachings. Several participants stated that they believed that social problems were caused by members of their generation accepting Western values and practices without considering the impact on society or without modifying their acceptance of western values and practices to be more in line with their own sense of morality. According to the participants, Emirati women participated in post-secondary education as a means to achieve self-satisfaction, to assist in developing their country, to provide for themselves and their children if necessary; and to achieve their future goals. Some participants mentioned that post-secondary education gave Emirati women, who had limitations on personal freedom, a chance to become more independent.

This study found that, according to the participants, the post-secondary education experiences of Emirati women was different from the experiences of other Arab or Muslim women, although their social conditions were similar. The Emirati women who participated in this study tended to define themselves in terms of their Islamic identity and perceived that their government had given them the same rights as men in society.

However, most participants mentioned instances in which women had more obstacles or barriers to utilizing the benefits of their post-secondary education in the workplace. The difference between the experiences of Emirati women and other Arab women was that the government of the UAE was actively trying to encourage women to participate in the workplace through providing educational benefits to women and enacting legislation to encourage companies to provide more opportunities to UAE nationals. Emirati women were provided with more educational and vocational opportunities than women in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries; however, occupations which brought women in contact with men or were physically strenuous were not considered suitable to the participants.

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